

HELEN MACKNIGHT DOYLE



MARY AUSTIN
WOMAN of GENIUS

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by

HELEN MACKNIGHT DOYLE

Author of *A Child Went Forth*

\$3.00

Mary Austin fought a good fight all her life. Opposed by tradition, prevailing custom, and her family's lack of faith in her, she won a great place for herself in America's hall of fame—as a novelist, dramatist, short-story writer, poet, expert in Indian lore and history, as a religious mystic of extraordinary importance. She struggled for women's right to career and ballot. She succeeded in interesting an indifferent nation in the cultural heritage of the Indian and Spanish life in our Southwest, thereby enriching our national life and arts. She was a great factor in educating America out of the provincialism of the 1890's, a great champion for poetry in America. Carl Van Doren once wrote of her: "A new degree ought to be conferred upon her: M.A.E., Master of the American Environment."

She struggled with a directness that made her enemies; her battle was continued even through illness and domestic tragedy. It was a good fight in a cause worth winning. Out of it she emerged a great woman, a writer of first rank, possibly the most impressive figure in American literature since Walt Whitman and Mark Twain.

When Dr. Doyle began, as a pioneer woman doctor, to practice in the small town of Bishop in the Rockies, Mary Austin was teaching school there, dreaming of the novels, stories, poems she would write. The two young women became close friends and remained so. This biography is a record and an interpretation that in many ways will remain unequalled. Dr. Doyle is not uncritical; but she interprets, and has a fine perspective. Those who have read her *A Child Went Forth* will know that she writes always with charm, intelligence, and a common sense that amounts to genius.

Mary Austin: Woman of Genius is one of the great books of 1939, and one that has its timeless values.

MARY AUSTIN
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Great women must be more than wondered at, more than admired. But first of all they must be understood as women, higher-powered, deeper-breathing, neither mimics nor angels. The Amazons were not born breastless.

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GOTHAM HOUSE
NEW YORK

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INTRODUCTION

AFTER MARY AUSTIN'S DEATH in 1934 Carl Van Doren wrote: "She was past fifty when I first met her and she seemed then to have been always wise and secure. She moved with a grave dignity that was somehow larger than pride. The light of the desert in which she saw everything was the light of eternity. She seemed at home wherever she might be because she carried a universe with her."

Reading this I recalled my first meeting with Mary Austin. She was then twenty-seven years old and presented a very different portrait from the one that Carl Van Doren has sympathetically drawn.

When I opened offices on the Main Street of Bishop, Inyo County, California, and started to practice medicine and surgery, I began hearing about Mary Austin. Before I even met her I realized that she must be an unusual individual with a strong personality.

Gossip runs riot in small towns but it is mostly friendly and inoffensive. Much of it, of course, bubbles over into the doctor's office and I heard that she grossly neglected and mistreated her subnormal child, that she avoided her duty to her home and her husband, who was a very fine man, that she was a snob, holding herself superior to the people of the town.

I was prepared to dislike Mary Austin after all the disagreeable things I had heard and my first encounter with her certainly did nothing to discourage that feeling.

One day a messenger came from the Frager ranch where Ruth, the Austins' only child, had been placed in charge of Mrs. Frager. I was urged to come as soon as possible as the child had a high fever and was apparently quite ill.

My first thought was that her mother would want to go with me to see Ruth. I knew that Mrs. Austin's work at the Academy, where she was teaching, would be over for the day. I got my horse and buggy and drove by to pick her up. I was directed to her class-room and found her sitting alone at her desk. As she rose to meet me I saw that she was a rather short, somewhat dumpy looking woman with a homely, heavy lower face, a sullen mouth, fine eyes, a high forehead and abundant, beautiful gold-brown hair. She looked tired, high-strung and harassed.

I told her of Ruth's illness, explaining that I was on the way to see the child and had driven by, feeling that she would want to go with me. She went back and stood behind her desk, almost as though she were endeavoring to put that physical barrier between what she was impelled to do and what she realized would be my criticism of her action.

"No," she said, "I do not wish to go with you. Ruth makes me nervous and I make her nervous. It is not good for us to be together. You go and do what you can for her."

I was young and emotional and it seemed to me her action was an offense against all motherhood. And yet, behind her words, I caught a burden of sorrow and frustration, an ache of loneliness, that spoke of even greater depths of emotion than would have been evidenced by a natural mother's response to her child's distress.

When I saw the child I realized that all she needed was someone to minister to her physical well-being. Of mental well-being there was none and never would be. I realized, too, how an overly-sensitive, mentally alert individual might find unbearable torture in the continual presence of that abnormal child of her flesh. Yet I still clung to that tradition of especial tenderness shown by mothers to their under-privileged offspring, that tradition which has caused so much unhappiness to those who are constantly crucified by its presence.

While Ruth's illness lasted I continued to report her condition to Mrs. Austin, hoping, perhaps, to rouse that maternal feeling, to what end and for what purpose it is difficult to say, unless I was already aligned on her side and wanted her actions to justify her in the eyes of the community. The fact that I came to her as I would have to any normal mother, without the critical approach with which she found herself continually surrounded, established a friendliness between us. By the time Ruth was well there was a bond that lasted through the years.

The town of Bishop is located in the high Sierras, surrounded on the north, east and west by mountain chains and peaks, falling away to the south by passes that lead to the great Mojave Desert. Mary Austin and I found ourselves mutually responsive to the beauty of the environment. She would come to my office in the evening and pace the floor between the prescription counter, the air-tight heater and the treatment table, talking in the rhythmic prose that became so characteristic of her writings. I listened, thrilled by the spell of enchantment that she wove into the peaks and passes, the canyons and desert of this awe-inspiring country, and into the lives of the Indians, sheep-herders, prospectors

and cattlemen, lives of all those, to us, ordinary people who moved against the background of the land which she was to make known as The Land of Little Rain.

*When required by her first publishers to give some account of her life and writings Mary Austin said, "There is nothing really to tell. I have just looked—nothing more, and by and by I got to know where looking was most worth while. Then I got so full of looking that I had to write to get rid of it and make room for more." **

I have always been very grateful that I was permitted to listen while she was endeavoring to find, before they were committed to the written page, words that would most vividly convey her impressions of the country and the people.

Her progress was slow at first. Poems, sketches, short stories were accepted. Then came The Land of Little Rain, a book of sketches revealing the sure touch of the master craftsman. It was acclaimed by critics and established Mary Austin as one of the outstanding writers of her time.

She stayed on in Inyo County, gathering material for The Flock and Lost Borders. Finally she went away and joined the literary colony that was being formed in Carmel, California. Later on she established a home in Santa Fé, New Mexico. During this time she became one of the leading women of her generation: a writer of novels, plays, short stories, articles, poetry, all in a style peculiarly original and expressed in words that were so perfectly chosen to convey her thought, that she was considered a master of the English language.

The writing of a long list of books and articles would

* *The Women Who Make Our Novels* by Grant M. Overton, Moffatt, Yard & Co., Dodd, Mead & Co.

seem a sufficient accomplishment, but added to Mary Austin's literary work was an indomitable search for a better way of life. This was shown by her activities in the suffragist campaign, in her defense of the Indians against political chicanery, in her battle for the restoration of the arts of the natives of New Mexico, in her tireless study and urging of the folk way as a cure for the rootlessness and restlessness of the American Scene, in her conviction that small landholders, adequately protected in their rights, should be encouraged as the backbone of this country; in her eager search, often bordering on the mystical, for a religion that would satisfy her needs.

Again I quote Carl Van Doren who said of Mary Austin, "A new degree ought to be conferred upon her: M.A.E., Master of the American Environment."

By what tremendous strength of will and vitality of spirit had the Mary Austin of twenty-seven become the 'wise and secure' woman of fifty, Master of the American Environment?

In her autobiography, *Earth Horizon*, Mary Austin tells of her early discovery of two personalities that existed in Mary Hunter Austin, one, Mary-by-herself, dependent on affection, congenial environment, understanding approval; the other, I-Mary, sufficient to herself and a wonderful refuge when Mary-by-herself failed in her adjustment to her surroundings.

The book is written in the third person with a few occasional shifts to the first. It is as though I-Mary, an impersonal narrator, tells the story of Mary-by-herself with sympathy and understanding, a device quite characteristic of Mary Austin's attitude toward her life and work.

For many years I saw that lonely, misunderstood, frus-

trated Mary-by-herself turning to the release of I-Mary, following the pattern which she was sure was hers to follow, cutting close to the quick of life, scornful of the criticism of those who questioned her right to follow the pattern.

Mary Austin was hailed as the Star of Carmel and the Uncrowned Queen of Santa Fé, but very little has been said of that important formative period of her life when she was the Priestess of the Land of Little Rain, acting as mediator and interpreter between men and the gods of inspiration and beauty.

I am jealous for the land which gave so abundantly to one who found in its ruggedness and simplicity that vital spark which illumined her work.

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CHAPTER I

IN *EARTH HORIZON*, MARY AUSTIN'S AUTO-biography, we find that a feeling of loneliness was linked with the earliest recollections of her childhood. Even in 1870, when she was two going on three, she somehow felt herself outside the tender affection which surrounded the other children.

On a late Sunday afternoon of that year she trudged along, her short legs trying to keep up with her father, George Hunter, her mother, Susanna, and her brother, Jim, aged five years. It had been a long day for Mary. The family party was returning from Uncle Jim Valentine's. Uncle Jim was going to move into the country, south of town in Carlinville, Illinois. The discussion had centered around the advisability of the Hunter family moving from the house which George Hunter had built on South First Street to this more desirable locality. It was an argument in which Mary had little interest and she was tired and sleepy.

There was a hill ahead and it looked like a very long hill. Then her attention was distracted by the beautiful christening robe in which baby Jennie was dressed, the long skirt with its ruffles and tucks and embroidery falling over Father's arm as he walked.... She even tried to count the tucks. She could count as far as four. But it was hot. All at once Mary settled down in the center of the board walk.

Her spirits rose when Father started to hand the baby over to Mother so that he could pick-a-back Mary up

the hill. But Mother was annoyed, exclaiming, "Let her alone. She'll come when she finds she has to." Then Mother said to her in that exasperated way that had already grown familiar to the child, "Look at Jim. He's not complaining!" Mary was used to this comparison of her own shortcomings to Jim's satisfactory behavior. The fact that Jim was five going on six raised no question of the fairness of the reproach in her mind. But even that apparently deserved reprimand could not spur her to further efforts.

She just sat there, numb with weariness and saddled with a feeling of unworthiness, and watched the rest of the family go on over the hill. She knew that they had deserted her but she did not cry. She just felt heavy inside.

Then, after what seemed long hours of misery, Father came back over the hill. She breathed a long sigh. Her head dropped to the board walk. When Father picked her up she was asleep.

As Mary grew older her imagination prompted her to do and say things that did not conform to the accepted standards of behavior. There was the time when Jim fell off the load of household goods when the family finally moved from South First to Plum Street. The story of his adventure made such an impression on Mary that she passed it on, not as something she had heard about but as something she had seen.

Mother was shocked when she heard about it. She tried to make Mary understand it was telling a story to say you had seen something when you hadn't. It was a wicked thing to tell a story. But Mary protested, "I did see it!" She had only to shut her eyes and there was the wagon, and there was Jim sliding off the mat-

tress into the mud, and there were the horses, and there was a white house on one side and a wild plum tree in blossom on the other.

"You just imagine," Mother said.

"What is 'imagine,' Mother?" Mary asked.

"Thinking you see things when you don't." Mother looked at Mary as though she would like to shake her.

Mary was puzzled. It seemed there was a difference between thinking you had seen something and really seeing it. It was very confusing sometimes. Things imagined were often so much more vivid than things seen. Her mother punished her, endeavoring unsuccessfully to break her of the habit of story-telling. Jim told on her when she entertained the neighbor children with stories which were perfectly true to her, but which Jim, looking out for the morals of his sister in big brother fashion, called by an ugly name—a really dreadful name—lies!

Mary found that being punished did not make her stop seeing things and Jim's telling on her did not make her stop, either. Many a time she went supperless to bed but her imagination survived.

After the family moved into the house on Plum Street, Father was elected to the office of City Magistrate and everyone called him Judge. Before that he was Captain Hunter because he had been a soldier in the War of the Rebellion. This new title seemed to give an added importance to the family and Mary was much impressed.

But in spite of this advance in the family estate, Mary, four, five, six years old, had many troubles. Having been made to realize how wrong, really wicked, it was to tell about things as though they had happened to you

or you had seen them with your own eyes when everyone, except yourself, knew you hadn't, she tried to tread cautiously between truth and fiction by a differentiation which she evolved in her childish mind.

She found that things had faded out around the edges, like dreams, were oftentimes things which she had imagined or heard someone tell about, while things which she had seen were distinctly outlined.

Another of Mary's troubles lay in the fact that she had what seemed to be a very exasperating way of saying unexpected things at the most inopportune times. Children were supposed to be seen and not heard and it was evidently most annoying, in the midst of a well ordered conversation, to have her burst forth with an observation that revealed most embarrassing thoughts that were being carefully hidden by polite evasions.

Mother scolded and punished, sometimes even bursting into tears. "I think the child is possessed!" she would explode, and Mary, not knowing of what, promised not to do it again, which she didn't until next time. It was a trait that was never to leave her. When she intuitively felt something being hidden, some motive that did not appear on the surface, it was as though a spring released the thought that came and the situation was exposed before even she realized what havoc it might cause.

So the strong imaginative power that was to reach maturity later in Mary Austin's writings was linked with a tendency toward mysticism and clairvoyance when she was a child.

Years later Mary Austin wrote, "The arc of my mind has an equal swing in all directions— I can see truly as far in front of me as I can see exactly behind me."

Psychology teaches us that we tend to think people ab-

normal whose values are not our own. If their natural gifts are different from our own we do not believe in them. Those who do not see life as we see it must be wrong.

Because the family and society react in this manner towards those who possess an unusual and what seems to them unnatural endowment, Mary was looked upon as what at present is termed a problem child. Meanwhile Mary, due to these peculiarities, found herself a rather puzzled and lonely little girl.

It was about this time that she discovered I Mary.

Jim was six years old and started to school that fall. It happened, one stormy day, that he was kept at home. Mother was kneading bread and Jim was reciting his A, B, C's, to her. Mary sat on a stool at the corner of the bread board, absent-mindedly rolling a bit of dough that Mother had pinched off for her. She was intent on looking over Jim's shoulder and watching the picture of the letters as he repeated them. "O," said Jim and Mary, seeing the shape of the letter as Jim pointed to it with his finger, made her mouth into a round O. "I," said Jim. Mary pointed a floury finger to her eye, "Eye, Mama?"

"No," said Mother, "I, myself. I want a drink. I Mary."

Slowly and more slowly Mary rolled the brown worm of dough, made grubby by her small, warm hands. She looked around the room. Nothing had changed. Outside the window the snow came down in great flakes. Mother kneaded the big chunk of dough until it snapped like a rubber band. Jim was bending over his primer and the curl on top of his head fell down over his eyes. Mary fingered her blue pinafore. The fingers were hers. The pinafore the one she had put on over her gray flannel dress. But inside the little girl sitting on a stool

at the corner of the molding board something had happened. I Mary, I Mary was there!

Because I Mary had seemed to come out of Jim's book, Mary coaxed Jim, who was proud of his superior knowledge, to show her everything in the primer. If there were pictures she must know what it said in the lines underneath them. But she was never quite satisfied until she got the book in her own hands and turned the pages. Sometimes I Mary came out from them, sometimes not, but it was always worth trying.

I Mary helped tremendously when Mary-by-herself was sick or tired and longing for someone to love and comfort her. There were times when Mother, looking so pretty and comfortable, would sit in the rocking chair holding baby Jennie in her lap while Jim leaned over her shoulder and she told them about when Father went to war. Mary, wanting so much to be part of it all would try to snuggle close to Mother's knee, but Mother always moved and drew her knee away and said, "Hadn't you better get your stool, Mary?"

It wasn't much fun, having to sit by herself on a stool while Jim leaned on Mother's shoulder and baby Jennie was hugged close in her arms. But I Mary would always stiffen her back and take the sting out of her eyes and make her quite independent of them all.

In spite of these unhappy experiences, not quite comprehended or understood, life, for the child, Mary, was a very pleasant affair. Father, who had not been very well since he came home from the war with fever and ague (or fever-'n-ague as the children thought of it), spent very little time in his law office and a great deal of time out of doors. He planted an orchard on Plum Street and there were fields and flowers, red clover

and apple blossoms, and baby Jennie growing up to play with and adore and crown with wreaths of fragrant violets. There were long walks with Father in the winter, getting acquainted and finding fern fronds and sassafras in the early spring.

There were busy times with other children in the neighborhood, helping to fight the pests, picking potato bugs, fetching and carrying in the struggle against crayfish that ruined the corn and against tobacco worms that would cut a crop to the ground in twenty-four hours.

There were long summer twilights when Jennie was old enough to sit between Jim and Mary on the porch and Mother would sit in the doorway and rock the next baby, Susie. Then Susie died and George came and still Mother rocked and sang, "Nicodemus the slave was of African birth..." She sang other songs that came from the war that Father fought in, and songs that Great-grandmother, Polly McAdams, sang to her children about the war that Great-grandfather fought in, songs of Bunker Hill and Lexington.

Then Mother would tell stories of how the "underground" had helped the slaves to escape and how there was an old station right near where they were sitting. These stories made the shivers run up your back but later it was great fun to play in the old house in town where there were closets and passages that had once been the refuge of runaway slaves.

Mary, at five years old, was an introspective child, and although life was mostly a pleasant succession of happenings, she had found out three things: first, the refuge of I Mary; second, that Mother liked to have Jim or Jennie lean on her but when she, Mary, tried to snuggle up to her, she pushed her away; third, that

Father understood how strange and unexpected things came into her head and popped out without her meaning them to.

The first was an exciting and comforting secret, all in one. Exciting to know that deep down inside of the little girl whom everyone knew and criticized and sometimes hurt, there was I Mary, into whom she could withdraw and be comforted. Already the child, Mary Hunter, had found the refuge that was going to become more and more essential to that lonely woman, Mary Hunter Austin.

The second, that evident lack of response to her yearning for affection from her mother, she felt but could not understand. As the years passed she did unravel the mystery but at that time she did not know that she had been thrust on Mother at a most inopportune time, a time when she was faced with the problem of managing with a small income and a husband who was still suffering from malaria and its sequela, for which he had been discharged from the Civil War. There was also, at that time, the worry about Jim who was not quite two years old and had developed symptoms of having inherited some disability from Father's weakened condition.

It was not a happy time to discover that there was another child on the way, and Susanna Hunter had not welcomed the prospect. Then, too, women who had cheerfully borne their dozen or more of children and never questioned time or circumstance, taking them all as a gift of God, had begun to rebel and wonder if something might not be done about it; if, perhaps, they might not have some choice in the matter. Such thoughts, of course, were very secret thoughts, not to be men-

tioned even to one's husband, least of all to him. And because they were repressed they may have had a more disastrous effect on the child to be than as though they had been expressed.

It is difficult to determine how much Susanna Hunter's feeling of resentment toward the child that she was carrying had to do with Mary Patchin.

It was sometime after her mother's death that Mary Austin learned about her. She was in San Diego to deliver a lecture when Mary Patchin called on her.

Mary Patchin had been George Hunter's sweetheart before he married Susanna. They became separated by malicious gossip and their romance ended disastrously, but the love which they felt for each other endured. When she introduced herself Mary remembered seeing the name Mary Patchin written in her father's books. They talked of him and of what he would have thought of Mary's writing and what her mother would have thought. Mary confessed that her mother had never been very much interested in her work.

Mary Patchin said, "I am not surprised. I didn't know your mother but I know she didn't want you." Then she told how she had called on the Hunter family the summer before Mary was born. She saw Susanna Hunter's condition and it was evident to her that the unborn child was not welcome. The emotion that she had felt for her youthful lover, George Hunter, flooded her. She thought, "This should be my child. This child will realize those gifts that would have come to maturity in George Hunter had he married me." When she found that the child was a girl and was named Mary she took it for a sign. For years, without ever seeing the child, she kept in touch with her progress until, when she

visited Mary, she had records that had been preserved since the first announcement of her college activities; evidences of the fulfillment of that prophetic understanding that had come to her that day.

Did Susanna Hunter sense all this on that summer afternoon when she was heavy with an unwelcome child and her husband's former sweetheart came to call?

The third discovery the child, Mary, made was that delightful experience of little secrets shared, little 'twinkles' with Father. Father was an entertaining storyteller and his life became a thrilling romance to his children, a romance more exciting than anything read in books.

There was the story of how he came to America from England with his brother William and how they worked their way up from New Orleans to St. Louis on a Mississippi river boat. He told of the Indian canoes loaded with buffalo meat and hides, paddling South to trade with the white men, of rafts floating squealing hogs to market, of cargoes of cotton and tobacco loaded and unloaded by negro slaves whose broad backs were lashed by a whip in the hands of the overseer if he was not satisfied that they were working to their utmost strength.

When Father told about that and of how strange and brutal it seemed to a young Englishman, coming to the land of the free, it was easy to understand why he had enlisted in the War of the Rebellion.

There were stories of planters and trappers and pioneers. Stories of pestiferous flies and mosquitoes. But the story that Mary loved best of all was the story with the "twinkles." It was about an Irishwoman who had heard about the strange beast or bird or insect with a snout that poked into people and sucked their blood. She saw an elephant, part of a traveling show, being unloaded from a

river boat. Here was a monster such as she had never seen before and he seemed to have the necessary blood-sucking equipment. Overcome with astonishment and fright she exclaimed, "Holy Jasus, and is that a muskaytoel!"

Mary had an acute ear for words and she was sure that the first time Father told the story he said, "Holy Jasus," but the next time he said, "Holy Moses." The little spring inside her nearly went off to tell Father that he had made a mistake, but just in time she saw Mother's mouth get firm and she saw Father twinkle his eyes at her and she knew she must be quiet.

Then she understood that Mother did not approve of words like that. They were not to be said when Mother was there. You always felt sure Father would never say "Jasus" when he told that story again, but there was always that delightful uncertainty, for when he got to that part of the story he hesitated and you caught the flicker of his eye in your direction, and you held your breath, wondering if this time—but Mother always won. Nevertheless it was the most exciting game Mary knew.

If they had known then that the anopheles mosquito was the insect that had attacked Father and sent him home from the war, not hurt by bullets but sick with fever and ague so that he was unable to go on fighting, it might have appeared as menacing a beast to them as the elephant did to the Irishwoman.

But they blamed the miasma that rose from the marshes when the weather grew hot and sticky in Indian summer and Mary lay in her crib, swallowing quinine which was done up in wafers that broke open sometimes, and feeling so miserable that when Mother did pick her up in her arms, which was something she always ached to have happen, she was not comforted.

CHAPTER II

ONE CANNOT READ THE WRITINGS OF Mary Austin without being impressed by her belief, as she expresses it in *Earth Horizon*, that: "Man is not alone or helpless in the universe; he has toward it and it toward him an affective relation."

It is interesting to note how, all through her life, Mary was working toward the modern trend in religious thought and teaching. She felt that prayer is not so much an emotional wrestling with a God to be feared and propitiated as a putting ourselves in communication with that great power in the universe which she designated by the Indian term of Wakonda, the Friend of the Soul of Man.

When Mary was a child prayer was a religious gesture which you performed as though you believed in its effectiveness even though you secretly doubted that your supplication would meet with any tangible response. But intuitively Mary, as a child, found what psychologists assure us is true, that only by child-like opening of our minds to the mystery and wonder of life may we enhance our relation to those inflowing experiences from earth horizon and arrive at mental health and understanding and a feeling of security in the universe.

Fortunately Mary Austin's first experience of the Friend of the Soul of Man came when she was six years old, too young to be inhibited by the "yes—but" attitude of intellectual approach. It came when she was in a dreamy, receptive mood, induced by the natural

beauty with which she was surrounded and to which she was peculiarly sensitive.

One lovely June morning she ventured alone down to the foot of the orchard. She went further than she had ever gone before, a bit frightened but urged on by the wind in the grass and the beckoning of a tall walnut tree on the slope ahead, a tree that reached to the bluest blue sky that Mary had ever seen.

Coming to the tree, she stopped to watch a bee droning about a wild foxglove at her feet. She was no longer frightened but stood quiet, listening, knowing for one perfect moment that there was nothing to fear, for with the earth and the sky, the wind and the trees, the flowers and the droning bee, she was part of something greater and more wonderful than she could grasp. Because the word God represented the most awesome presence she knew, she whispered, "God," and from deep down in her consciousness came the reassuring answer, "God."

So real was this experience—which Mary in after years recalled as *The Practice of the Presence of God*—that it made a vivid and lasting impression. In one of her latest books, *Starry Adventure*, the hero, Gard, is pictured as having a similar experience to the one that came to her as a child under the walnut tree. This shows that it has always a living experience to her for she says, "I wrote what I lived, what I had observed and understood."

But the Presence which six-year-old Mary found under the walnut tree at the foot of the orchard was in no way associated in her childish mind with the God-of-the-Bible. Since the house on Plum Street was quite a long way from Sunday School the children often spent Saturday night with Grandpa and Grandma Graham.

On Sunday morning Grandpa Graham would read the Bible to them. These contacts with God, as contrasted with her experience under the walnut tree, were a more or less mild torture to Mary. She would sit on the horse-hair sofa while Grandpa read from his favorite Book of Revelations. Her legs were not long enough to reach the floor and she was continually sliding forward and hunching back with the short hairs piercing her Sunday petticoats in a most irritating way.

But Mary was so entranced by the magic of words that she would patiently endure any discomfort to listen to reading. And so she learned of this other God—the God-of-the-Bible—and of that heaven so different from the little hill under the walnut tree, a heaven of streets of gold where bare-footed angels walked. (Mary always thought it must be rather hard on their feet.) All the angels played harps, and Mary, who had never seen any kind of harp but a jew's-harp which she had been unable to play, felt that she would not have much in common with that angelic throng. Besides, there was only one tree in all heaven and the "one" who sat on the throne "was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone." It was all very uninviting when compared to the long grass blowing in a soft wind. The "fearsome beasts" presented a frightening picture to the little girl who had found God where the bee droned in the fox-glove and the birds sang under the blue sky.

Mary knew that she had been baptized and would be expected to go to this heaven of the God-of-the-Bible foreveranever, so she decided to do the wickedest possible things in order to escape that doom. First she tried repeating the Lord's Prayer backwards. Her little Catholic friends had told her that this was a terribly

wicked thing to do about Mass and she figured if it worked with Mass, why not with the Lord's Prayer which was surely the same thing to a Methodist child that Mass was to a Catholic?

Finding this a difficult undertaking to accomplish successfully she decided to walk backwards while saying the Lord's Prayer in the usual way. To make her deliverance doubly certain, she would then repeat the wickedest word she knew three times in succession—The Devil—The Devil—The Devil—. Her mind was relieved by this abracadabra. No child as wicked as she had been would ever be allowed in the select sumptuousness of the heaven of the Book of Revelation.

Mary's passion for listening to people read aloud often led her into trouble. The words made a pattern which she could not always understand but which she knew formed a picture in the minds of those who read. Many a night when Father's asthma was troubling him or he had the pain in his leg and Mother read him to sleep, Mary would slip out of her bed across the hall and steal to the crack of their bedroom door, which Mother always left open so that she could hear the children.

She would lie there on the floor, listening. Sometimes she fell asleep and Mother found her when she put the lights out. Then she would shake her and perhaps spank her and tell her she would catch her death on the bare floor in her nightie. The only result was that Mary would try harder to keep awake when she crept to the door and crouched, listening, so that she might get back to bed without being discovered.

Because her curiosity and apparent willfulness often betrayed her into disobedience Mary stood out as the "difficult" child of the family. Jennie was growing into

an adorable, tractable little person who never did anything she ought not to do.

Jim was a conventionally satisfactory boy. He accepted the design for living which had been formulated according to the psychological and ethical standards of the day. He was unhappy if he felt he was out of favor with anyone. His acts of disobedience followed the approved continuity of temptation, disobedience, emotional reaction, confession, punishment, with Jim weeping copiously and Mother usually adding her tears to his, reconciliation, and Jim going about with a "cat that ate the canary" expression which Mary found most irritating.

Mary was prone to question prohibitions. She would investigate and act according to her best judgment in the matter. If Mother had forbidden her to go wading because the water was too cold and Mary found by dipping her hand in it that the water was as warm as it usually was when they were allowed to go wading, she went and took her chance of punishment.

She admitted that she had disobeyed, but she did not pretend that she thought she had done wrong. Her admission was never an emotional confession of guilt. She never tried to avoid punishment but she did resent the standard of behavior to which she was expected to conform. Even as a child she achieved a certain detachment from the whole affair. This was sure to happen if she was sent to her room to meditate on what she had done, for then Mary took charge of the situation and assumed a quite impersonal attitude toward the whole affair.

Mother was exasperated when punishment seemed to make no more impression than "water on a duck's

back." When Mary would refuse to kiss and make up her quarrels with the other children, even when Jim, who was most often at fault, signified his willingness to adjust matters after the accepted formula, Mother would resort to that traditional threat of mothers, "We'll see what your father has to say about it!"

That was a climax to be avoided as often as possible for Father was always sorry when you did anything to trouble Mother.

"If you don't take your punishment, how are you ever going to learn to behave?" he would ask, and Mary, still willing to be punished but not to "kiss and make up" would answer, "Well, then, you punish me." But Father seldom relieved her mind by doing so.

Mary started school when she was five and a half years old, mainly because her mother did not know what else to do with her. Her equipment for this momentous occasion consisted of a small tin lunch bucket and a slate and pencil. Attached to the slate was a sponge which was supposed to be dampened and used as an eraser, but this was soon lost and she resorted to spitting on her fingers and cleaning her slate in the same way that the other children did.

Beginners were not allowed to have books, but belonged to the Chart Class. They recited in unison, A-B, Ab, B-O, Bo.... Seven hours was a long time for restless six-year-olds with only a bit of marching, a bit of singing, noon and recess to break the tedium. It all seemed very boring to Mary.

Between the recitations of A-B, Ab, and B-O, Bo, you were supposed to say the syllables, printed on a chart for the benefit of beginners, over and over to yourself, moving your lips silently to form the sounds.

Then, if you kept up with the class, you were allowed to look at picture books in between times.

Mary had a seat mate, Minnie Farrell, more experienced in school matters than she was. Minnie had managed to have a book of Snow White and another of Three Bears allowed under the heading of picture books. Looking at the pictures and the words that accompanied them, Mary began to read to herself, fitting the sounds of the letters together into one-syllable words that adjusted themselves to the pictures.

Then, as she so very clearly remembered in *Earth Horizon*, a really dreadful thing happened. She became so absorbed in the story of Snow White that when the Chart Class went forward to recite she remained in her seat, blissfully unconscious of what was going on until, suddenly, Miss Becky Snow, the teacher, stood over her.

"What are you doing, Mary?" she questioned severely.

"Reading," Mary answered in a small, frightened voice.

"O, no, Mary, you can't read. You are only in the Chart Class. To say you can read when you can't is a story."

There it was again—a story. But Mary was sure she was not 'maging this time. "I can too, Miss Snow. I can."

"No, Mary."

"I can—"

"Little girls who tell fibs in school must wear the dunce cap." So Mary was stood in the corner with the tall paper cone on her head and the book in question in her hands. Everyone laughed and poked their fingers at her. But she was not moved to anger or tears, or even to making funny faces when Miss Snow's back

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was turned. Instead, she just went on reading and finished the story.

This time, as luck would have it, it was proven that Mary was not telling a fib after all. Just as she finished the story a pleasant, handsomely whiskered gentleman came unexpectedly into the room. It was the Principal himself! He asked what this little girl had done that she should be wearing a dunce cap.

The teacher, annoyed that the Principal should appear at such an inopportune time, announced that she had told a fib, pretending that she could read.

Mary, who should properly have burst into tears, instead declared with conviction, "I can. I am reading now."

Teacher's face got red.

The Principal said, "That's very easily proved. Read."

Teacher, her face getting still redder, protested, "She probably knows it by heart."

The Principal picked up McGuffey's First Reader, and handed it to Mary.

Not for nothing had Mary teased Jim to read to her, watching the words, hearing the sounds, and now, put to the test, she could read and did read triumphantly the page put before her. The result was that the Principal gathered up Mary along with her lunch bucket, slate and straw hat and deposited her in Room Two from which she was transferred to Room Three by the time she was of recognized school age.

There followed a series of promotions based on her ability to read and remember and not taking into account that she had but the sketchiest idea of the other two of the three R's. But why bother about 'Riting and 'Rithmetic when there were stories to be read? The

one about Alice, for instance. One of the girls had brought the book to school long enough for Mary to read two chapters, which left her feeling that she could not endure the suspense of not knowing what happened to Alice.

Alice was the first book that Mary felt she could "walk around in." This was the criterion that she applied to books ever afterwards, and the quality that later was characteristic of her own writings.

It was Father who understood. "By Jove, Susie," he said to Mother, "she really has been reading it—Alice, you know—Lewis Carroll—we'll have to get it for her."

Mother's face fell with that "can't afford it look" and she said, "I can't think it is good for children to read so many fairy stories." Mary felt she would die if she could not have the book so she offered the savings in her bank and the additional sum that Grandpa gave her every Sunday morning for learning the Golden Text.

Mother was still unmoved. Father said nothing but after supper he held Mary in his lap and read *Pilgrim's Progress* aloud to her, which was his way of showing that he thought it was all right for her to read fairy tales.

In a day or two he came home, smiling. In his pocket Mary found a small gray book of Alice and, most wonderful of all, Father showed her a card in the back with her name, which meant she could go to the circulating library and get two books every week. Even Mother's comment, "There must be books that Jim can read, too," did not spoil the occasion for her.

CHAPTER III

NEXT, PERHAPS, TO FATHER IN MARY'S affections was Grandpa Graham. In spite of his reading from the Book of Revelation and the distressing consequences that resulted in her mind, there was always a sly flirtation going on between them.

She did cross-stitch book-markers for him, learned long chapters of the Bible by heart and read *Scottish Chiefs*, feeling very romantic over having a Scotch grandfather. When she and Father were out walking and found a Scotch harebell, she dug it up and put it in a pot for Grandpa. He kept it and watered it carefully until it blossomed, which showed Mary how much he treasured it.

Grandpa Graham was a pharmacist and he owned a drug store with big bottles filled with red and green colored water in the windows. He was always surreptitiously slipping cinnamon drops or licorice or peppermints into her hands or pockets. But best and most convincing of all, she could lean against his shoulder when he was telling stories or talking to someone else, and it did not draw away from her the way Mother's knee did.

It was her love for Grandpa, more than the five dollars reward he offered to the grandchild who could read the Bible through first, that held Mary to the task. She did not hesitate to impose herself upon members of the family, visitors, anyone within earshot, to listen while she read, so that there could be no question about her

having done it thoroughly, according to contract. At last the feat was accomplished and she had read the Bible from cover to cover before she was ten years old. Grandpa gave her the five dollars but the greatest reward of all was to hear him say proudly, "My granddaughter, Mary, has read the Bible all through!"

Although she did not profit from this as much spiritually as her grandfather had probably hoped she would, yet she undoubtedly laid the foundation of that rich vocabulary, that unerring choice of words, that rhythmical beauty of expression combined with a distinguished style which characterized her work later on as a writer.

Outside of reading, there was nothing as interesting in school as the things Mary saw on the way there. First of all, she nearly always walked part of the way with Father when he went to the office, and walking with Father was always a treat. In the spring they passed thickets of haws and wild crabapple in bloom and in the autumn saw the sumach blazing with color. Then Mary went on alone, past the store run by a German, where there were queer sausages and cheeses and roots and herbs. There were also Indian beads and things for carding wool, and looms, things that Father said were not to be found any place else in the country, now that so few people made cloth or spun wool at home. There was a little log house with harebells growing all around, and then the nice, neat red brick houses with white trimmings where the Germans lived, and the German Catholic Church.

Going home another way there was the Lutheran Church and the City Cemetery, and the Morans' on Irish

Row, who had a Paisley shawl on the table in the parlor and the most beautifully bound books!

The one gift Mary possessed of which her family heartily approved was her cleverness at cooking. She became interested at first because there were usually stories connected with all the best recipes: stories handed down from one generation to another, stories of weddings and christenings and wakes, stories of the women for whom Mary was named, six of them beginning with Great-great-grandmother on Father's side, Mary Hendricks.

But best of all were the stories of Great-grandmother, Polly McAdams, who was the bosom friend of Sarah Childress when they were girls together in Tennessee. Sarah Childress married James K. Polk and became the first lady of the land and Polly McAdams married Jarrot Dugger, who was a descendant of the noted chemist, Louis Jacques Daguerre, the discoverer of the daguerreotype. Dugger was just the Americanized version of the famous name.

Although Polly McAdams did not become the first lady of the land she did become one of the first ladies of Macoupin County in Illinois. Mary loved to hear of how Great-grandmother, Polly McAdams Dugger, traveled to Illinois in an ox-cart, bringing with her the pieced quilts and handmade blankets for which she had carded and spun the wool.

Polly McAdams was not the sort to take things as she found them and let well enough alone. While her husband was planting orchards and starting the first Sunday School in their neighborhood, Polly insisted that he also build a water wheel to which the neighbor women could attach their spinning wheels and so have

their hands free for piecing, quilting, and making of garments which must still be done by hand.

When the orchard began to bear, Great-grandmother Polly used her ingenuity to preserve the fruit in crocks with wide mouths, something after the fashion of the screw top jars that came later. Thus she became a pioneer in the canned fruit industry.

Mary learned to make "spiced apples" from the recipe great-grandmother Polly used when she made them to go with venison potpie, or tom-turkey with pecan dressing, roasted before the fire. Years later Mary Hunter Austin used the same recipe to make "spiced apples" from seedling apples planted by the Spanish pioneers in New Mexico three quarters of a century before Great-grandfather Dugger planted his orchard in Illinois.

It was Great-grandmother Polly McAdams Dugger who taught the women to make a mixture of herbs and arrowroot which proved an effective remedy during the cholera epidemic of 1851. Their home had been noted for her hospitality as well as her cooking and Mary learned how circuit riders and evangelists, legislators, and Abe Lincoln, who was considered a somewhat second-rate lawyer, were welcome guests in the Dugger home.

Somewhere among the cherished family heirlooms there was a letter that Abe Lincoln had written to the Duggers.

So the recipes and the stories had been handed down to Mary's mother, Susanna, through grandmother, Hannah Dugger Graham, the fourth daughter of Polly McAdams Dugger. Grandma Graham was undoubtedly Polly McAdams' daughter when it came to cooking. Her gingerbread was famous. There was no other ham

and bacon quite so good as that cured in Grandma's smoke-house. It was she who invented a mixture of pears and quince and sweet apples made into a honey-colored conserve, the recipe for which was handed on to Susanna Sevilla, Mary's mother. A wide-mouthed bottle, one of those that had stood in the windows of Grandpa's drug store, was always filled with it for special occasions.

That bottle came from the drug store that was burned down. When everyone came to see the ruins (a fire was an occasion in a place where so few exciting things happened) they found Grandmother selling bread and ginger cakes which she kept on selling long after the fire to help build the new store.

Small wonder that Mary, descendant of Polly McAdams Dugger and Hannah Dugger Graham and Susanna Sevilla Graham Hunter, took a prize for her jelly at the Maucopin County Fair when she was ten years old. She knew how pies, four deep, were made with something hearty like mince-meat or dried apples with honey and nutmeg on the bottom, tart plums or sliced lemon with currants for a second layer, delectable strawberry or raspberry for the third, and pumpkin or lemon cream or cheese custard as a crowning delight.

From these beginnings Mary became a fine cook and was very proud of her mastery of the art. Years later when Carl Van Doren acclaimed her as a seer she complained that he had neglected to tell what a good cook she was.

But the paramount interest from her childhood on was in books and whenever Father was reading or writing she was drawn to his desk as by a magnet. One day he was preparing a paper to read before the Horti-

cultural Society. Mary climbed up by a chair to sit on top of his desk. Perhaps the foreknowledge that became remarkably developed in her later life had warned Mary that something might happen to her father. At any rate, when he looked up she questioned in all earnestness, "Will you leave me all your books, Papa, before you die?"

"Well, that depends. Why do you want them?"

"I'll sell them and live on the money until I write a book my own self."

"Well, of course, for anything so important as that—" Father answered with one of his nicest twinkles, "What kind of books do you plan to write?"

"All kinds," Mary stated unhesitatingly.

She never could understand why people laughed when Father repeated this conversation. Already Mary was seeing herself as she wished to be and do. It was after reading *Ivanhoe* which was borrowed from the Irish Morans that Mary decided definitely she would write a book with footnotes edging the pages like lace ruffles on a dress and an appendix, a book in which people walked around and talked to each other.

Mary began her literary career by telling stories to the neighbors' children. They would leave everything they were doing, playing in the haymow or the rock quarry in the summer or games—Button, Button, who's got the Button and Pussy in the Corner—in the house in the winter, to listen while Mary 'maged stories for them.

She had never seen a play or heard an opera. The family had attended Christmas Eve entertainments at the Methodist Church twice and had gone once to see a traveling magician do his tricks. Other times Mother had to stay at home with Jennie and George, or Father

was sick and the house on Plum Street was too far from town for the other children to go alone.

Although Mary couldn't carry a tune, her first serious literary attempt was a play to be sung which she began when she was ten years old. It was written in verse which was probably inspired by having recited the *Lady of Shalott* at school entertainments and read the *Lady of the Lake*. Outside of these the play to be sung was made wholly out of dreams and imaginings. It was all about a castle and a keep and a lady fair and brave men with swords. With the creative persistency that was so markedly to distinguish her work later on, Mary devoted two or three years to this masterpiece, writing scraps and hiding them in her arithmetic and geography to keep them from the too inquiring eyes of her family. But finally the play to be sung was abandoned.

Occasionally it became necessary for Father to visit the Bottoms, the low land that lay along the river, on errands connected with legal matters and he sometimes took Mary with him. There she saw very different houses from the nice red brick ones with white trimmings. The people who lived in them were different, too. They lived in log cabins, overrun with old-fashioned flowers, sweet William, bleeding heart, love-in-a-mist. Pumpkins and watermelons grew larger and more delicious there than in any place else. There were old looms in corners of the dark cabins where women who could almost work the shuttles with their eyes closed wove blankets and rugs. There were cooking places out of doors and kettles hanging from cranes and Johnny-cake boards. There was sorghum growing and there were sorghum mills that pressed the sugary liquid from

the cane to fill the barrels whose contents provided a delectable spread for home-made bread when hungry children wanted a "piece" in between meals.

Mary had a feeling for these people that was to grow into one of the greatest interests of her life, and flower in her endeavors for the preservation of the arts of the Indians and Spanish Americans of the Southwest. She knew that the finest of those rugs and blankets that the women were weaving would be shown at the County Fair along with the pieced quilts, tufted counterpanes, wax flowers, cardboard mottoes and pickles and jellies made by the women who lived in the red brick houses.

Besides the prize that Mary had taken for jelly in the children's department at the County Fair, she had also taken one for verbenas which she had raised in her own garden and one for pressed wild flowers. But she had never taken a prize for fancywork.

Even at that early age she had an unusual feeling for beauty and she failed to see it in the shell picture frames, the "spatter work" and mosaics made from bits of colored paper. She tried her hand at everything just to see if she could do it, but as soon as she succeeded in making a useless, unbeautiful ornament, she abandoned it, much to Mother's annoyance. She was already becoming aware of the fitness of things which she afterwards found voiced in Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture*: "Do not use golden ploughshares, nor bind ledgers in enamel. Do not thrash with sculptured flails; nor put bas-reliefs on millstones."

CHAPTER IV

MANY FAMILIES, AFTER THE CIVIL WAR, grew accustomed to having an ailing husband and father. Often the children had never known their father under other conditions, and they accepted disability as a mark of distinction. They did not realize that the menace of unhealed wounds and unconquered infections lurked always in the shadow of their daily life.

The Hunter children could not remember when Father had not had asthma. They were often awakened at night by the sound of his struggle for air to listen in frightened silence to his labored breathing. But soon lulled by the reassuring sound of Mother's efforts in his behalf, they fell asleep with the pungent odor of burning pastilles in their nostrils.

They never realized that they were poor. Mary could not imagine a nicer house to live in than the one on Plum Street with the woods so close and the meadow knee-deep in clover, where she and Jennie played and wheeled baby George in his perambulator. Of course they had no bath tub but not many people in Carlinville had bath tubs. Besides everyone knew that people should not bathe too often. Grandma Graham could remember when it was against the law in Boston to take a bath unless a physician ordered one.

Even though the house lacked some conveniences, there was a Singer sewing machine which Grandpa Graham had given to Mother. There were always good books to read aloud in the evenings, and neighbors com-

ing to the house to hear the news that Father brought home at night from the office. The only news came by telegraph to Carlinville. The telegraph was something new and strange. That was the way they heard the results of presidential elections and of such catastrophes as the Chicago fire, almost before they happened!

Altogether life in Carlinville was pleasant and uneventful. But Mary had decided definitely that when she became a famous writer she would live in Boston. She would travel, oh, yes, to England and Out West, but she would make her home in Boston. There she would imbibe the same atmosphere that surrounded Longfellow and Hawthorne and Lowell and write great poems like *Hiawatha*.

Then, suddenly, all the dreams were dispelled by unwelcome reality. There came winter nights when Mother would rush into the bedroom where Mary and Jennie slept, with George asleep in her arms.

"Take care of the baby, Mary, Pa's sick!" she would whisper. Mary, only half awake to the responsibility of mothering George, would hear Father's cane thumping across the hall and his half stifled groans.

Father sick! Mary's small world began to totter. Maybe he was only having another attack of his asthma, she tried to console herself. In a day or two the baby's crib was brought into her room and she was given full charge of him at night and from that time on she began to sleep with one eye open and a weight that felt like a stone in her chest.

"Shuss—shuss—" she would soothe George in an agony of fear lest he should disturb Father. She would get up in the morning with her head heavy for want of sleep and cook a soft boiled egg for George before

she had her own breakfast. Then she would rush to get herself and little Jennie off to school. Sometimes she fell asleep over her books and as soon as school was out she rushed home to take care of the baby.

When summer came Mary would wake as soon as George began to stir in his crib and go softly downstairs with him so that he would not disturb Father. She would fix a bowl of warm milk that the hired man brought in fresh from the cow and she and George would have that with bread broken in it for breakfast. Then she would take him down into the orchard or among the trellised grapevines. After a night's sleep and a satisfying breakfast George was quiet and happy and Mary was free to invite that foreshadowing of future events which always proved so alluring.

There, in the fresh morning world, with the peace of the new day as unbroken as the jeweled cobweb tents suspended from the clover blossoms, Mary would experience a sensation of being transported into a future full of exciting events and unbounded possibilities. They seemed to spin round her, catching her up in a vision of the momentous happenings that awaited her.

These early morning excursions into the realm of fancied achievement grew into a habit. When she reached maturity they became so important in her creative work that she continued to practice them. They became part of her religious experience, the outgoing of her inner self toward a responsive activity in the universe.

Meanwhile the doctors came and went and never seemed to arrive at what was the cause of Father's illness. They talked about how he had never recovered from the hardships he had suffered in the army. There

were stories retold of the days when Mother was a bride and went to Father at Corinth near where he was stationed and stayed there until the first baby died of "fevernague." There was the story of how Father was inspecting pickets and ran into a detachment of Confederate soldiers and had to hide all night in a swamp with the cold, thick mud up to his neck.

For two interminable years the ordeal of Father's sickness went on; better one day, worst the next. There was an operation but it did no good. Jim and Mary were old enough to be overcome with the possibility that Father might die, but they never admitted it to each other. Little Jennie was a great comfort to Mary in those days and it was to her that all Mary's confidences were made. She was old enough to realize that Father was sick but not old enough to realize that he might die.

Jennie was allowed to go to school with Mary to keep her out of Mother's way. As Father grew worse, Mary would be seized by sudden premonitions. She would grow frightened and taking Jennie by the hand, without stopping to ask, "Please may I be excused?" she would hurry home. Her throat tight, she tried to cry but tears would not come. When they passed the City Cemetery with its silent headstones, she would be overcome with a realization of what Father's death would mean and sit down on the board walk and cry as if her heart would break while little Jennie patted her, "Don't cry, Sistie, don't cry."

Then came a time when Jim and Mary and Jennie stayed home from school until Father died. There were only a few days, with Father in bed and the neighbors bringing in all kinds of good things and sitting up

nights so that they would not be alone in the house. Years later Mary still had vivid pictures of Father with his face so thin, his eyes bright and strange with all the twinkles gone, and Mother wetting his lips, so dry and cracked. Father always followed her with his eyes, reaching out his hand to her while Mother wiped her tears away quickly so that Father would not see.

At the last, when everyone gathered around, their eyes wet, something shut up tight deep down inside of Mary and she couldn't cry. She hid her face against Uncle Utt, afraid, because the tears would not come, that someone would think she did not care!

But Mary had two memories of which no one could rob her: the understanding twinkles between her and Father, and the fact that when he was on crutches and his leg would draw up in a cramp and the sweat would break out on his forehead, if Mary was alone with him he would gasp—"My God—oh, my God!" But when Mother was in the room with him he never used such words. It was worth remembering, even with tears, that Father never minded saying, "My God," before her alone.

Some time after George Hunter's death Mary had a sore throat, and felt so sick she thought she might die and go to be with Father. The family were so distracted that little attention was paid to her and she tried to be brave and make the least possible trouble. No one thought of calling a doctor. Only at night when she and Jennie were alone and it seemed as though she could not stand it another minute Mary would rock back and forth, numb with pain, and little Jennie would put her arms around her and smooth her hot face with her hands.

When she got better Jennie was taken sick. At first she sat very quietly in a corner by the fire and patiently tried to answer questions. But soon she could not speak or swallow, even a drink of water. The doctor came. He said Jennie had diphtheria, and that he had been called too late.

The day that Jennie was buried Mother stood by the graves of Father and Jennie, dressed all in black widow's weeds. Mary, yearning to comfort and be comforted, looked up into Mother's eyes and tried to come closer to her. But she felt herself pushed away, shut out from any participation in her mother's grief. The gesture left a wound that never quite healed in the child's heart.

That night she overheard something that, young as she was, she could never forget. She heard Mother say to Aunt Effie, "Why couldn't it have been Mary?"

Jennie's death was so poignant a crisis in Mary's life that even forty-four years later, when she wrote her autobiography, she touched upon it with the greatest restraint. It is evident, in view of the elaboration with which she wrote of what widowhood meant to her mother that Mary found it exceedingly difficult to write of what Father's and Jennie's death meant to her. It was like disturbing the scar of an old wound that, in healing, has caught the filament of some nerve which causes excruciating pain when touched.

Only by the brief sentence in which she speaks of Jennie's death does she convey something of the agonizing sense of loneliness which that bereavement brought to her. After more than forty years she wrote, "The loss of her is never cold in me. She was the only one who

ever unselfishly loved me. She is the only one who stays."

Studying this milestone in Mary Austin's life in the light of modern psychological investigation, one wonders if a subconscious, unacknowledged feeling of guilt added to the pain of Jennie's loss. It is difficult to trace these subconscious records but the fact, undoubtedly commented upon, that Jennie caught diphtheria from Mary, the remembrance of the caresses that had been Mary's only comfort when she was suffering from the disease, joined with her mother's rebellious outburst against a Providence that had taken her best loved and left Mary, planted a burden of guilt and unworthiness in the mind of a child already finding it difficult to adjust herself.

The eminent psychologist, Doctor Seabury, says "These hurts of childhood make a child morbid, brooding, and until these hurts are understood no adjustment is possible. It may result in a defensive inferiority complex, a conflict between pride and humility." No better example of this conflict between pride and humility could be given than the life of Mary Austin.

Fortunately for Mary she had one of the surest means of overcoming complexes, the Image Making Process. Through this escape she could see herself as she wished to be and do. Mary-by-herself was able to summon I Mary and overcome the hurt though never freed from its poignant sorrow. But many brooding, unhappy years intervened.

The only occupations that were open to women at the time George Hunter died were housework, going out by the day sewing, teaching and nursing. Susanna Hunter chose the latter, being fitted for it by having

borne seven children in fifteen years and having cared for an invalid husband during the greater part of that time.

The Plum Street house was rented and the family, now reduced to Mother, Jim, Mary and George, moved to a small house in town. When Mother was away nursing Mary struggled with the problem of going to school, taking care of George and keeping house. Managing in some way to hurry through breakfast, she would put up a lunch for herself and Jim, take George on the way to school and leave him with a woman who cared for him during the day, hurry home from school, stopping for George on the way, put the house in order, cook supper and "do up" the dishes, with Jim's reluctant help, and then go to sleep with "one ear awake" for little George.

But full as Mary found her days to be, she still had time to be miserably lonely: lonely for the house on Plum Street, lonely for Father coming home from the office at twilight as he used to do and for Jennie's sweet presence. She missed the old evenings with the family gathered around the big lamp, reading, getting their lessons, recounting the happenings of the day. She was lonely for the God of the walnut tree who never seemed to come to her under the spreading elms and maples of the town.

Mother had stopped their subscription to *St. Nicholas* when they left the house on Plum Street. Mary missed it. She tried bringing home copies from the library but they no longer gave the same pleasure. They had a way of reviving memories of the old home, memories that she found must be put in the back drawer of her mind.

The chief growing pain of Mary's girlhood and one that pointed her activities in after years was her resentment of the place in society that was reserved for widows. It did not take long for a child of her keen intuition to realize the intangible feeling toward a widow and to suffer some of that aspect of the burden of bereavement through her mother.

She came to realize that as long as a woman had a man who protected and provided for her, no matter how inadequately, she had a secure social position. But as soon as that prop was taken away she automatically became somewhat of a social burden to be grudgingly looked out for by her relatives, expected to be grateful for left-overs, and often obliged to become an underpaid worker in the homes of more fortunate women who had escaped the tragedy of losing their husbands. The first social resentment that Mary experienced, the first criticism of the way the people of Mother's generation imposed the conventions of wifehood and widowhood, came through observation of what a penalty her mother suffered because of the loss of Father; the realization that women were not judged by their value to society but by their permanent and agreeable arrangement in the social scheme.

The same revolt was taking place in the minds of many American women at that time. Widows, inhibited as they were by years of submission to the social status of widowhood and by the disrespect which any struggle against convention might reflect on the departed husband, remained for many years outwardly passive but inwardly rebellious. Although they were in mental revolt they were inarticulate.

Mary Austin in *Earth Horizon* * says, "But it was years before Mary had, to her way of thinking, a free, intelligent response and that from a male mind. This happened in London when she met H. G. Wells and found herself airing her views on the subject freely, as she had never been able to do to an American man, and being assured of his sympathy and understanding through his reply, "Oh, the way we penalize women in England!"

At this period in her life Mary, too, had become more articulate on the subject than she was at an earlier date. She had become an ardent worker in the suffrage campaign. She was at last free of an unhappy marriage to which she had undoubtedly clung much longer than she would have if there had not remained in her mind something of her mother's experience. Some dread of the penalty suffered in not being judged by her value to society but by her adherence to the conventional pattern. Widowed, so far as physical resources and mental and spiritual co-operation, soon after her marriage to Wallace Austin, Mary remained for years in that relationship.

That she was restrained by convention which in the early nineties still frowned upon divorce, is not a tenable theory for Mary consistently scorned the conventions. That she endured the relationship so long was undoubtedly due to dread of the loss of that protective shelter which society had erected around a married woman.

In *Earth Horizon* Mary Austin says, "On the whole, what I regret is not the lack of a satisfying marriage, but the loss out of my life of the traditional protection,

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the certification of ladyhood. I have never been taken care of; and considering what that has meant to women in general, I feel a loss in the quality of charm and graciousness which I am unable to rationalize. The experience of being competent to myself has been immensely worth while to me. It gives clarity and poise. But having been without the experience of being taken care of, I am unable to realize the significance of that measure. I feel always at a little loss."

CHAPTER V

GRANDPA GRAHAM SENT MOTHER AND Mary and little George to visit Aunt Mary Peters in Kansas. It was a joyous experience for Mary. She was entranced by the roll of the prairies, the rhythm of the wind, the playhouse in the peach tree and the novel experience of riding double with Aunt Mary's children to guard the stock that grazed on government land.

But there was one unforgettable incident that showed she was still a difficult child; the time when she was rude to Aunt Mary's husband, Uncle Peter. Uncle Peter was a free Methodist preacher as well as a farmer. Being a free Methodist seemed to mean going the Methodists one better, making more noise, making a greater display of eliminating all vanities. Aunt Mary had even given up wearing her gold wedding ring, which Susanna Hunter, a devout Methodist, considered rather shocking.

It was unfortunate that Mary overheard Uncle Peter say to Mother, "If you are bringing up your children to think that their father has any other lot in the hereafter than that of eternal damnation, you are bringing them up to a lie." It made Mother cry. But not Mary who would not want to go to a heaven where Father was not included.

Mary knew that preachers were not to be talked back to, but no inhibition prevented her from defending the memories of her father. "I guess my father wouldn't want to be anywhere with people who thought that sort of thing anyway!" she burst forth. Which was, of

course, a very rude thing for a visiting relative to do. She was made to apologize but she did not retract. Mary never retracted.

Another summer a check arrived from Uncle Charles and Aunt Mary Lane in Boston, with an invitation for Mother and the children to come and spend six weeks with them. Boston—magic word for Mary—Longfellow, Hawthorne, Whittier, Harriet Beecher Stowe, all the authors whom Mary knew about were from New England and when she became a writer she planned to live there.

Nothing seemed strange to her, Boston Common, Bunker Hill, the Old South Church, blueberry, bayberry, partridge berry, she had read about all of them. The school histories and Longfellow's poems came alive when she climbed the tower of Old South Church and went to Faneuil Hall with her cousins. They even peeked through the gate at Longfellow's house and saw someone walking in the garden who might have been Longfellow!

Mary always contended in the face of the critical attitude of the younger generation, that Longfellow was, in some respects, the most important poet we ever had: "He was everything that kept alive in Polly McAdams and her kind the notion of mannerliness, of the gesture they missed and meant, on behalf of their children, to resume, the eighteenth-century gestures of gentility, of elegance, the feeling that went with high white houses with pillared portico fronts, and 'attitudes' of men and women toward each other.... He was the hair wreath in the parlor and the wax flowers under glass."

This was true not only in the Middlewest but in the West. I well remember the impression made on me

by his poems when I was a student at the old Academy at Bishop, California. Mrs. Logan, the wife of the principal, was a pretty woman with a small head, blonde hair which she wore in a French twist, delicate features, large gray eyes and an unusually small and well-shaped mouth. She had a sweet voice and evenings she would play the organ and sing,

*"I stood on the bridge at midnight
While the clock was striking the hour."*

We were care-free, out-of-doors, horse-back-riding, unpolished products of the country, living amidst the grandeur of the Sierras, so accustomed to their beauty that we took them for granted. If the homes of the Middlewest lacked cultural surroundings, those of the far West were even more given over to the exigencies of physical well-being. Not only the hair wreath in the parlor was left behind by the westward migration but even the parlor itself.

But the feeling of it was brought to us by those songs of Longfellow. Our emotions, never having been probed, were near the surface. The words of the song filled us with an exquisite melancholy and the realization of a beauty foreign to our experience. Mrs. Logan had put up prints of some of the world's famous pictures in the class rooms and when she sat at the organ and played we thought of her as Saint Cecelia. To this day, whenever I see a copy of that masterpiece I recall Mrs. Logan, sitting at the organ singing, "I stood on the bridge—" I am old-fashioned enough to be stirred by those sonorous lines—

*"Thou, too, sail on, O ship of state,
Sail on, O nation, good and great."*

We are told that Longfellow was a sentimentalist, but at least we could understand him and receive real inspiration from his message.

Mary was about eleven years old when she came under the influence of the Chautauqua Circle which had been formed in Carlinville.

Surrounded as we are nowadays by available educational opportunities, lecture courses, University Extension, adult education, it is difficult for the younger generation to understand the social outlet and mental stimulus that the Chautauqua courses afforded. Founded in 1874 on the shores of New York State's beautiful Lake Chautauqua, from which it took its name, the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle undertook, through vigorous slips of the parent plant, to issue a regular and systematic course of reading. This extended over four years and entitled students to a diploma when the course was completed.

Women whose social activities and mental horizon had been bounded, up till this time, by Church Suppers, Missionary Teas, quilting parties and sewing circles welcomed an institution that released them from the humdrum routine into broader vistas.

Susanna Hunter promptly joined the Carlinville Chautauqua Circle, even though she was too busy nursing to attend the meetings. Membership gave her the privilege of reading the prescribed books for the course. She often brought home some of the books and Mary discovered that the course in literature for that year included the poems of Longfellow which were the greater part of her course in school English, with the added interest of more voluminous footnotes, a source of great delight. There

was another book, included in the course in geology, Hugh Miller's *Old Red Sandstone*.

Mother dismissed the book with the pronouncement that it was "too old for her," probably influenced by the fact that anything in literature that had to do with evolution was considered dangerous reading by the Methodist Church. But Mary read it, at first because it seemed to bring her closer to that out of doors which she and Father had known together, and then for sheer delight in the geological map it opened to her. It was several years before she owned a copy of *Old Red Sandstone*, but it was the first book she ever bought for herself.

A very interesting commentary on the influence which the book exerted on Mary Austin and others of her generation was published under the title *The Unfolding Earth*, a review of *Earth Horizon* which appeared in the *New Republic*, "To touch upon even as marginalia the points of illumination and stimulus it (*Old Red Sandstone*) offered in this country for forty or fifty years of the last century would be to write an essential passage in the history of the American mind. The Scots Mason-geologist created a sense of the ancient earth and its grandeur with a conviction of immensity of pattern, something no American writer was able to give, not Thoreau, not Audubon, with all his exploratory genius—a sense and a conviction that seemed to meet a need for synthesis and scale among Americans caught in the breathless experience of possessing new country.

"Hugh Miller transformed Mary Austin's sense of earth, 'The earth became transparent, molten, glowing' and she remembered the, 'feel of the author behind the book.'

"Miller was a notable personality. He was more than a geologist, he was a mystic, wrought upon by the imag-

inative inheritance of the folk, his own people, the Scots of Cromarty.... These prepossessions are only lightly striated through *The Old Red Sandstone* but for Mary Austin slight tracteries would be enough.... It was like her thus to seize upon a work, perhaps the single one of her time, that would stir basic qualities in her own temperament, and moreover had a peculiar significance among that American 'folk' of which she is writing."

Mary was fourteen years old when the family moved into the house which Mother had built on Johnson Street. The farm was sold. The pension applied for was allowed along with officer's back pay and the family were in more comfortable circumstances.

Mary found the neat, square house with its six rooms arranged in two rows just a house, never a home. It had the usual conveniences of middle class dwellings of that period in the Middlewest. There was no bath. The water closet and the pump for drinking water were outside. There were fireplaces with black marble mantels. The woodwork of the two front rooms was grained, a luxury which Mother had allowed herself and which was a source of great pride and satisfaction to her. It was a substantial house, built from the ground up.

But to Mary, there was a lack of imagination that left every corner like every other corner. It was all so neat and hard that all processes of living slipped off the surface and left no imprint of the people who lived there.

Yet she was silenced by the conviction that since everyone else approved, she must be queer and unappreciative and lacking in some universal instinct. The generation that followed Mary were destined to yield to their convictions and voice their disapproval in an outbreak of

stories of the Middlewest that swept the country like an epidemic. Mary was born in the in-between generation, though, and was never quite able to despise the house or to free her mental processes of the environment. She always felt a little below herself as long as she lived there.

She hated the furniture with its black and gold cut-out designs and its red and green upholstery. She saw nothing beautiful in having the lithograph of President Garfield and papier maché placque of Lily Langtry on the walls along with family photographs.

There was not even a whatnot to attract interesting and unusual things to its shelves. Its ugliness was just short of an illness to Mary who, all her life, experienced physical unease when forced to live in rooms of ill chosen color or lack of proportion.

In the days before they moved to Johnson Street the family had possessed, as did the majority of their neighbors, a few good pieces of inherited furniture which were discarded to make room for new things. Mary had learned to discriminate, remembering with pleasure the Currier and Ives prints and oil portraits on the walls.

Mary had arrived at an age when whether boys liked you or not was a matter to be pondered. Mrs. Hunter explained that they did not like girls who talked about pretty views and flowers and the things they had learned about the habits of birds and animals. Mary was especially instructed not to quote poetry or show that she was familiar with the writings of Thoreau.

Girls were supposed to be more interested in their escort than in their surroundings and to limit their excursions into the country to picnics and fishing and nutting parties with the crowd.

Mary found that Mother was right. Her companions were not only not interested but were bored by subjects which she found most exciting. According to a book which Aunt Mary Dugger still cherished as the proper guide to behavior and which seemed to be the accepted code for young people, the young woman who was blessed with the attentions of a young man should read sufficiently to be able to introduce interesting subjects of conversation but not go on to the point of expressing an opinion about them. The book stated emphatically that: "The gentleman will tell the young lady what to think!" Mary rebelled at the idea. They wouldn't tell her what to think. More likely she would tell them!

Although she did not have the same flattering interest in boys of her own age that girls were assumed to have, yet she liked them and enjoyed sharing secrets about them with other girls; seriously discussing whether really nice girls should play Post Office and whether it was telling if a girl whispered who she surmised had sent her a valentine.

Mary was very forthright with the boys. She didn't believe in silly games like Post Office. If she wanted to kiss a boy she would just kiss him and not pretend to make a game of it. She was much more troubled about being a Methodist and not having a whatnot in their home than she was about sex relations.

What she most resented was the prevailing idea that girls were not capable of competing intellectually with boys, that they were handicapped mentally as well as physically. At that time women were gaining more physical freedom. They had advanced from only being allowed to cross their ankles in public to not being severely censured if they crossed their knees. Women

could even raise their arms in the presence of a gentleman to adjust their hat pins without being accused of trying to show off their figures.

There were two well-born and educated ladies in Carlinville who had become converts of Amanda Bloomer and wore pantalettes that were attached snugly around their ankles with elastic and a tunic that was at least six inches shorter than the ground-dusting skirts of the period. But since public opinion considered this costume an outrage on common decency, they only ventured out at twilight—but they stuck to their bloomers!

There was a woman who stood right up in meeting one night and said that marriage without love was legalized prostitution. Mercy! What a shock that gave the congregation!

All these happenings were like the eruption of a contagious disease, an evidence of systemic disturbance. Although Mary did not realize it at the time, she was witnessing the birth of a new attitude toward a function over which women were supposed to exercise no control. She heard the problem discussed by women who said boastingly, "Well, I've had eleven....I ought to know," or, "Well, I've lost seven. I ought to know."

Mary Hunter was so much more vitally interested in other things that the problem of sex never mattered very much. Girls who grew up in families where a new baby arrived about every year were not as susceptible to Freudian shock, complexes, or repressions when faced with the natural processes of nature as they might have been in families who bred less prolifically. A young girl whose mother went out nursing as Susanna Hunter did was not apt to be amazed or especially concerned over the mystery of reproduction.

CHAPTER VI

MARY JOINED THE METHODIST CHURCH when she was thirteen, not because she was "convicted" of sin but because she felt a spiritual homesickness for the God of the walnut tree, the presence that had been such a living reality to the little girl but had deserted her or been absorbed in grief when Father died.

She had been brought up in the Methodist faith. Sunday morning always meant Mother singing hymns while she waited for Mary to tie her bonnet strings. One or another of the Dugger clan always led the singing in Bible class or at protracted meetings. Mary realized that they got something out of it, some portion of that experience which the Methodists called "The joy of the Lord." Mentally she could not accept the doctrine of salvation. She did not feel that she was lost, and so must be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. But she did feel an aching lack of that presence and a yearning for the soul-satisfying experience of feeling herself a part of the perfect whole.

There was a revival meeting that winter. Mary could not attend because of school work but she felt the urge of it when she was left alone at night with her books. No one talked to her about it and she asked no questions, but she knew that it was there. She pressed her face against the window pane and longed for a portion of the "joy of the Lord" which was being broadcast at the revival meeting.

The next day she talked it over with two of her school-

mates. That afternoon they asked to be excused from the classroom and went down into the basement and prayed. Mary had the Dugger trait of not starting anything she did not finish. The next night she went to the revival meeting. She listened to the exhortations. She heard the choir sing,

*"Are you washed in the blood
In the soul-cleansing blood of the Lamb?"*

It seemed a rather unpleasant, not to say revolting, song to her, but she knew what they meant. The Presence must be there. Other people felt it. When the evangelist gave the invitation she went forward with the others. She answered all the questions, made all the required gestures, and, expecting results from the prescribed formula, decided she was saved. She was very thorough about it. She underwent her probation satisfactorily, if not enthusiastically, and was received into full membership. She worked zealously, taught the infant class, trying to recapture the clear sense of the Presence. But it did not come to her.

The one thing that stood in her way more than any other was that you were held accountable, not to God, not even to the preacher, but to the congregation. She was always able to square her conscience with God, but she did not feel that she should be governed by the prejudices of the congregation. That was why, eventually, when Mary was responsible for starting a Little Theater movement and failed to support the argument that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, Mary Hunter Austin was read out of the Methodist Church.

But she never tired in her quest of the God of the walnut tree. Years later when she had written *The Land*

of *Little Rain* and was living in New York as a successful author, she wrote her friend, Elmo Pyle, in Bakersfield, California: "Yes, Elmo, you were right in your understanding—and I agree— It is in nature that I recognize God."

In *Earth Horizon* Mary says, "I am so little disposed to put blame where it is undeserved that I have taken pains recently to go over the ground of Mary's hope, when she became a Methodist, of finding again the God who came to her first under the walnut tree. There was a mystical life of Methodism, although you hear little enough of it now, which was not missed by Grandpa Graham nor by my mother and Uncle George. You saw it in their faces: you heard it discussed under terms of conviction of Sin, Redemption and Sanctification.... Great Aunt Mary Dugger, she had surely known when she had attained to Sanctification: there was a light around her and a pleasantness, and the words that she was reading in the Bible at the time stood out blackly and higher than she was against a flame."

This was not unlike what had happened to Mary at the bottom of the orchard, but nothing that they told her made it happen again. She never had a Conviction of Sin. She was never Sanctified. She went searching with a vague homesick feeling for God and could not find Him.

The trouble was that no emotion was of any value to her unless she was changed by it, brought something away from it. The moments of fervent religious ecstasy were not real. They wouldn't work for her. She must be actually able to get hold of them, make them a part of living, while to others the fact that they had "experienced religion" was enough.

Jim worried the family for awhile by indulging, as was the fashion among young men of the day, in Voltaire and Bob Ingersoll, poising, as it were, on the brink of unbelief with much the same gesture of manliness with which they raised the first mustache. Having thus, daringly, shown his freedom of thought, Jim settled down to join the church and enjoy the social benefits which it provided.

The prohibitions of the church against theaters and dancing did not trouble the young people especially. Jim was still somewhat clumsy, due to the lameness of childhood, and since dancing no longer had the charming abandon of house-raising and school-roofing pioneer days, Mary was not intrigued by the stiff and formal substitute of the period.

One winter *Uncle Tom's Cabin* came to town and everyone went to see it. Families drove for miles and brought the babies, the church allowing its members to attend and looking upon the performance in the light of a sermon.

Mary and Jim took part in amateur performances of the *Union Spy*, the *Two Orphans*, and *Ten Nights in a Bar Room*, which were given the sanction of the church because they were undertaken for some benefit or charity.

There were rumors that some of the respectable business men of Carlinville had, during business trips to St. Louis, gone to see a play called *The Black Crook*, a play in which girls wore pink tights!

The theater always had an allure for Mary and just once she went with Uncle Alex without Mother's knowledge, to see Joe Jefferson in *Rip Van Winkle*. Mother never found it out and Mary's conscience did not trouble her. On the contrary she had a wonderful time. She was

not worried about God's attitude in the matter either, for she felt He would approve.

Years later Mary's activity in the theater was to be a potent influence in causing her to be read out of the Methodist Church. Again she was not troubled about God's attitude in the matter. Eventually she became the author of beautiful and dramatic Indian plays, notably *Fire* which was produced in New York and *The Arrow Maker* and others which were staged in the Forest Theater at Carmel.

Just as Mary could not accept the belief that she was morally responsible to the congregation of the church, so she grew to resent the fact that she was expected to adjust her desires and tastes to those of the family.

She had caught up with Jim in school and he insisted on exerting a brotherly supervision over her. It was Jim who decided what should or should not be said in front of sisters. He welcomed an opportunity of exhibiting his prowess in her defense and bragging about it afterwards. When Mary tried to justify her behavior or intimated that she felt herself capable of judging what should or should not offend her sensibilities, she became conscious that gradually Mother was making Jim the pivot of family life, deferring to his opinions, centering her affection on him, making him, at fifteen, the head of the family, and expecting Mary to accept the situation, halloed, as it was, not only by tradition but by the best medical authorities.

A book entitled *The Ways of Women in their Physical, Moral and Intellectual Relations*, written by J. V. C. Smith, M.D., and published in 1857, succinctly sets forth the proper attitude of women towards the sterner sex.

"It is their mission to keep man, who is prone to displays of passion and outbursts of rage, in a bearable condition, by their talismanic presence. They would not be bearable, even to one another, were it not for the magnetic influence of woman, who is the agent of all civilization and certainly of refinement and morality. Even when silent, she rules the storms of human fury and calms the savage exhibitions of wrath in men, by the charms of her character."

That attitude had sufficed for Susanna Hunter's generation but in Mary's day sisters were growing away from the idea that brothers should be humored and made to feel that they were lords of creation. They were no longer convinced that the crown of a woman's life was the privilege of catering to some man's every wish and desire.

Many years later, when the feminist fight was on and Mary taking an active part in it, she heard the women say, "Well, it was seeing what my mother had to go through that started me," or, "It was being sacrificed to the boys in the family that set me going."

But tradition was still active when Mrs. Hunter was establishing her son as the head of the family. According to that amazing authority, J. V. C. Smith, M.D., "There is not the slightest ground for alarm, because women never band together for political agitation; they never prepare revolutions, nor is any social order outraged by them, however erratic a few peculiar individuals may appear in vain attempts and exhibitions not in accordance with their natures."

The medical authority of J. V. C. Smith to the contrary, however, Mary was not the only young woman of that period who rebelled resolutely against tradition and

surprisingly escaped the bad end in which such rebellion was supposed to terminate.

Mary-by-herself might have conformed and meekly taken the place assigned to her in the family circle, but I-Mary asserted her rights as an individual. Attempts at coercing her to accept the established family pattern only served to make her rebellious and put her on the defensive. This trait, carried over into adult life, often caused her to appear critical and superior when in reality it was the result of the defense mechanism established in her girlhood.

The story of the four-minute egg illustrates her attitude at the time when her expressed likes and dislikes met with no consideration from the family. During the two years of her father's illness, Mary with the care and responsibility of little George on her shoulders, would cook him a soft egg while hurrying to get through and get off to school. She finally arrived at the place where the sight of a soft boiled egg made her stomach turn over.

As she grew older and family affairs became better organized, she asked that her egg might be put in to boil two or three minutes before the others. This exhibition of choice in the matter came to be looked upon as an affront to the accepted formula for cooking eggs. Its importance was undoubtedly exaggerated by the fact that it was another one of the many differences that made Mary stand out from the family circle which Mother was so industriously drawing around Jim.

If the man of the house preferred soft boiled eggs, why that was the way the family should eat them, and like it!

It happened more often than not that Mary's egg was put into the pot at the same time with the others and

she was expected to eat it. It was evident that in spite of her professed liberality toward the woman's movement, Mrs. Hunter felt that in the family circle a different sort of boiled egg was more than a female had a right to claim on her own behalf.

"Well, my dear," Mother would say briskly, "if you can't learn to eat your food like the rest of the family—" And would be more than ever annoyed when Mary tried to attend to the boiling of her own egg apart from the family kettle. "Oh, Mary, why do you always have to have something different from the rest of the family?"

Secure in his position of domestic arbiter, Jim would comment in his irritating big brother fashion, "Somehow, Mary, you never seem to have any feeling for what a home should be!"

Soon Mary found that she did not care for eggs for breakfast.

But in some ways Jim was kinder than the average brother. He defended her in certain respects that were quite ahead of his time. He agreed that she should control her own personal expenditures at a time when a request for a regular allowance for a wife was looked upon as a violation of the marriage relation. Jim, who loved to argue, paid Mary the compliment of choosing to argue with her in preference to other girls or to the majority of boys. On her part it didn't matter what differences they might have in the family circle over four-minute eggs. She never failed in sisterly loyalty in public, which helped Jim to excuse or overlook some of her lapses from the conventional attitude.

When it came to reading it was always Jim and Mother who read aloud together: Roosevelt's *Winning of the West* and other books of the day. Mary found a

book, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, which she recognized as one of Father's favorites. She could not understand all of it and she longed for the companionship that she and Father had always shared in reading. She wanted to talk with someone about the book, read it aloud with someone who would help her to comprehend the beauty that she could only partially grasp. She hoped and dreamed that some day she would see the Campanile of Giotto at Florence, the only building where Ruskin believed beauty existed in the superlative degree. "—that bright, smooth, sunny surface of glowing jasper, those spiral shafts and fairy traceries, so white, so faint, so crystalline that their slight shapes are hardly traced in darkness on the pallor of the Eastern sky, that serene height of mountain alabaster, colored like a morning cloud and chased like a sea shell."

Mary did not realize that she was cutting her literary teeth on *Old Red Sandstone* and *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. Books that would make her a master of literary style.

"It's all right for you to read Ruskin," Mother argued, "but not until you are older. I should think you would know by this time what comes of trying to be too old for yourself. Reading things like that before you can understand them is what makes you so queer that people don't like you."

All of which made *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* a less thrilling adventure than it might have been but failed to convince Mary that it was too old for her. Often in between the chapters she would experience again the same feeling that came to her when they lived in the house on Plum Street and she used to take George down into the orchard in the early morning. It

was something that billowed up inside, aching to escape and become part of all the knowledge of the world. It urged her to the study and appreciation of pictures, music, and great poetry, and to the reading of books entirely foreign to life in Carlinville, books on Egyptology and Oriental Literature.

Mother, exasperated, would protest, "Why do you fill up your mind with that truck?"

Not able to explain why, Mary would reply, "Well, I just want to!"

Although Mary could not explain how it came about yet she knew that the reading of good books released her as nothing else had the power to do. She never felt there was anything strange about this experience. It came from within; the place that she was later to designate as the Middle Place of the Mind. It prompted her to read more and more, reaching out for all the knowledge in the world, pulsing just beyond her grasp.

What Mary afterwards called the Middle Place of the Mind became as much a part of her entity as the pit of her stomach was part of her anatomy. But neither was a subject for discussion. There were still maiden ladies when Mary was young who said they had a pain in the chest when they meant stomach-ache. Mary knew that these experiences of her inner self, if disclosed, would be looked upon with suspicion as something verging on the supernatural and therefore queer. Natural movements of the mind as a subject of conversation were as taboo as peristalsis of the bowel.

Although Mary had been able to shed some of the responsibility of little George, she was much concerned when he reached eight years of age and showed no interest in reading. But Mother insisted, "Don't worry.

He'll take to it when the time comes," adding, "I should think you would know by this time what comes of trying to be too old for yourself."

Jim was attending Blackburn University, one of many religious institutions that sprang up all over the country at that time. He was supposed to have an especial gift for oratory. Oratorical contests were very popular and all the colleges participated. First came the contest in the College Literary Society, then the winners went on to the Intercollegiate try-out, then the State contest followed by the Interstate. No less a personage than the silver-tongued orator, William Jennings Bryan, admitted that his training in school oratorical contests had been of inestimable value.

Mary had started college at Blackburn that fall but contracted a heavy cold and had to give up regular work, so that she had time to devote to coaching Jim. She also had the ability for she was especially good at oratorical delivery, having received instruction from one of the "Perfessers" who went through the country giving courses in cultural technique, elocution, voice training, conversation, penmanship, character reading, and the Principles of Success.

Grandpa Graham encouraged these heralds of culture by buying memberships in their courses. Mary was the only one of his grandchildren who was always ready to take the course. She was proud that for once the family recognized that she had a talent that could be used to advantage in behalf of Jim and she bent her energy to the task of training him for the oratorical contest. She was able to tone down his tendency to overcome natural awkwardness by too vehement delivery, with the out-

come that Jim won the honors for his College Literary Society.

Immediately the family saw him on the way to fame: next the Intercollegiate, then the State, then the Interstate. It was an alluring prospect.

At this critical time it was decided that Mary should enter the Normal School at Bloomington, partly because her health did not seem equal to a college course, but mainly because teaching was the only profession open to girls by which they could make a living.

When Jim was preparing for the Intercollegiate meet, Mary was not there to help him. Jim took the lowest place in the meet. The reports criticized his awkwardness in delivery. Mary suffered for him, feeling that if she had been at home to help him he might have succeeded. She thought Jim would feel that way about it, that he would realize how much she had helped him before, and when she got home they would talk it over and he would say, "Gee, Sis, if you had only been here!" But when in a month or two she did go home, no one even spoke of it. She was heart-sick. It was as though she was completely outside the family circle in victory or defeat.

This was only one of the significant happenings that caused Mary, with others of her generation, to comprehend the possession of a talent as something precious to them, not to be shared without appreciation of its worth. Mary was not one to give away to her brother, husband or lover a gift which her energy and ambition prompted her to develop for herself.

CHAPTER VII

MARY'S FIRST REMEMBRANCE OF THE Temperance Crusade, was of two women who came to Carlinville and spoke in Mrs. May's parlor. Mother took her along because she didn't know what else to do with her. Mary did not remember what they said but she did remember how they were dressed.

The rather solid looking older woman wore brown merino with trimmings of plaid silk cut bias. There was one charming young woman who fascinated Mary. She was arrayed in dark blue shot silk with rows and rows of black velvet ribbon around it. She had a pork-pie hat with pink roses under the brim and a little sacque cut in square bobs and bound in the same velvet ribbon.

Mr. Hunter had joined the Society of Good Templars before Mary was born and when Mary was six years old she had worn a Band of Hope blue ribbon and sung,

*"Sparkling and bright in its liquid light
Is the water in our glasses—"*

And she had recited verses about,

*"Robert Reed—he wouldn't touch tobacco,
No, it is a filthy weed!"*

There had been times when Mary's playmates had been made very unhappy by a drunken father, and women had brought their children to stay with Mother until their father had gotten over his spree. Women came for Mother to treat them for bruises and blows that had

been administered by a husband in "one of his spells."

Mary in her teens had gone once with Mother to hear a woman speak in church on the right of women to refuse to bear children by drunken husbands. Something unusual happened that made this a momentous occasion. Mother put her arm across Mary's knee and took her hand and they were drawn together in a bond of sympathy for the rights of women.

Then came Frances Willard and all the women wearing white ribbons and studying Robert's *Rules of Order* and having their feelings hurt over parliamentary procedure, but sticking together, resorting to all kinds of subterfuges to raise money for the cause; women in diamonds and expensive furs who had no spending money and whose husbands could not understand why they needed any, "Darling, if there is anything else that I don't buy for you!"

Frances Willard was not only thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the movement but she also understood that women "wanted out." Sewing machines and factories had lifted the burden of the pioneer days of Polly McAdams, with all it took of woman's strength and ingenuity, and reduced it to uninteresting routine.

Mary began to understand that her mother hated that routine: the pot washings and sweepings and potato parings, the unending routine of meals, only bearable to her because it was performed for those she loved. It was astonishing with what speed she would accomplish the routine in order to be freed for the spiritual release she found in the W. C. T. U. and the church.

Mary found herself a square peg trying to be fitted into a round hole at the Normal School. There was

something inside that rebelled at the concentrated effort at getting everyone through the eight grades in the same way and as nearly as possible at the same time. It did not matter how great or small was their capacity for intellectual effort. She had a nervous breakdown in her second semester.

When she went home the family physician looked her over and evidently decided that she had overtaxed the capacity of her brain, which was known to be smaller in the female than the male! Mary knew that she had broken down under the five months' rasping insistence on a régime that violated all the natural motions of her mind. Although arc lights were being installed in Bloomington where the Normal School was situated there was no illumination along educational lines. The monotony of the same old formulas for teaching spelling and history, the schemes for getting the answer in arithmetic without really understanding the process, the stilted emphasis on rhetoric and grammar had more to do with her nervous breakdown than any physical disability.

Had Mary been given modern educational opportunities where intellectual freedom, progressive methods and scope for individual endeavor are emphasized she would have had no difficulty in making her adjustments. But opportunities being what they were, Mary could not argue with the doctor that her illness was something that calomel and quinine could not cure and was not to be attributed to that all-embracing term applied to indisposition in women, "female weakness."

No one admitted that there were natural outlets for the mind. The mind should be coerced to do certain things in certain ways. Mary realized that whatever she could get from education had to be arrived at by a dif-

ferent process. It must be by growth from within not by a cramming of her mind with facts and figures. She began to go about finding that way for herself without troubling anyone with her problem.

When she was confronted by the fact that Jim did not appreciate, was not even grateful for, her assistance in winning the laurels for his literary society, she made up her mind that it must be give and take between them. She also decided that her actions were not to be measured by Jim's behavior.

She had arrived at the conclusion that Jim's seeming self-restraint, so often called to her attention in criticism of her own performances, was due more to lack of emotion than to self-control. It was not that Jim and others, so often quoted as shining examples, controlled their emotions; it was that they didn't have them. To be lady-like was the last thing that Mary wanted if to be it meant giving up the joy of experiencing wit, anger, imagination. She had no intention of being regimented in her living.

In her teens Mary began to write poetry, with rather tragic results at first. Coming across one of her efforts that she had consigned to the waste-basket, Mother rescued it and showed it to Frances Willard whose judgment in everything social, sociological or literary she felt was the ultimate.

Between them they sent the verses to the *Union Signal*, a publication of the temperance movement, without even telling Mary what they were about. Fortunately they did not consider it quite womanly for a female to publish anything over her own name so they chose a pseudonym and Mary was not put to the torture of having to own up to it before her friends.

Neither of the women had any thought of what they had done to her. Mrs. Hunter took the poem without her leave as she would have opened and read a letter, assuming, since it was addressed to Mary, that she was at liberty to do so.

Mary never got over the incident of the bootlegged poem. After that she continued to write poetry and kept three or four diaries under fictitious names, never under her own. She began to cultivate the acquaintance of people in the town who interested her but of whom her mother did not approve. She was beginning to develop that inborn desire of novelists to get inside other people's minds and see what prompted them to do the things they did. It was difficult to explain to anyone but the urge was there and she didn't intend to fold her talent away in a napkin.

Mary's health was always interfering with the things she wanted to do. When the hot, sticky days of Indian summer came each year, she would have a siege of fever and ague. Most of the people in Illinois became immune to the attacks after ten or twelve years, but Mary could not seem to build up sufficient resistance, and attacks of malaria in the summer, combined with heavy colds in the winter were a greater handicap than any "female weakness" that the quinine-calomel dispensing doctor ascribed to her.

The summer that she was seventeen Mary went to visit Uncle Sam Dugger and Aunt Eliza in Missouri. She was free from malaria for the first time since she could remember. The life in the Ozarks was different from anything she had known before. She liked Uncle Sam who kept a general store, a railway station and a post-office. For years he had struggled to get the inhab-

itants to make something of the country round about but with no success. What had been good enough for their fathers was good enough for them and they continued to live in wantless poverty.

As a result Uncle Sam Dugger was never very busy, and since he had arrived at an age where looking backward was more interesting than prophesying, he occupied his spare time in spinning stories and weaving reminiscences for Mary's eager consumption. He brought her feeling closer to the Dugger clan than she had done since she had heard the stories handed down with the favorite recipes.

There was the story of how Uncle Sam helped to carry Lincoln to his grave, and the one of the day that the first railroad came to Macoupin County and people drove for miles to see it and, mustering their courage, took short rides on it. He told how, when the news of the discovery of anesthetics was received, many people felt that it was interfering with God's will, and men prophesied that it would take away from the courage men acquired from having wrestled with pain with a fortitude that came from within themselves.

It was Uncle Sam Dugger who told Mary that there was Indian blood in the Dugger inheritance, which came from the wife of the first Daguerre who married a Virginian with Indian blood in her veins.

Uncle Sam believed there was Indian blood in most American families but they had kept it dark because in the beginning the Indians were considered "Varmints." He was convinced, however, that the day would come when they would be proud of it. Perhaps the knowledge of the strain of Indian blood in her veins stimulated Mary, years later, to fight for the Indians, endeavoring

to restore to them their lands and rights which had been misappropriated through governmental injustice and chicanery. She studied their philosophy. She identified herself with them at times and eventually accepted their conception of the Friend of the Soul of Man.

When Mary returned from Missouri, her health was so improved that it was possible for her to continue her work at Blackburn University. Mrs. Hunter agreed that if she would make up the sophomore course by herself, she would allow her to go to college, if she would promise that "—she wouldn't throw it away on some man." The education of boys was considered a necessary expense, but that of girls was problematical. "What a waste: they'll only get married as soon as they are out," women were prone to say with much head shaking.

But there was a deeper significance than appeared on the surface in this desire of younger women to be educated. It was indicative of a growing rebellion against excessive childbearing; always a baby under their apron, and the burden of infant care when sanitation, prophylaxis and antitoxin were unknown.

Mary wanted a college education, so although she had already decided that about five children would make a satisfactory family for her, she promised she would not marry until she had made something of her education.

Mary had read that George Eliot was thirty years old before she had anything published, and although she expected to do better than that, she knew there was an interval to be filled with the business of making a living. Her experience at Normal School had made the prospect of teaching a dismal one. She had a genuine talent for painting, but when she found to what practical uses Mother expected her art to be applied—pond-

lilies on wooden spoons, roses on rolling pins, snow scenes on bolting cloth to be tacked on the corners of pictures and whatnots and called "throws"—she lost interest.

But Mary was always reading: *Progress and Poverty* by Henry George, the interest in which was stimulated by the Ozark mountain people and their economic outlook, also by the fact that she remembered it was one of the books that had always been at Father's elbow. All through these years reading contributed more to her education than any other diversion or study.

Blackburn College was a Presbyterian institution. It had been started by Gideon Blackburn for the initial purpose of providing an education for young men who planned to enter the ministry and free scholarships were offered to that end. It was an admitted center of cultural interest, and for young people like Mary, who knew what they wanted, prepared them in a fairly competent manner to find their way about the world of ideas.

Mary chose to major in Science, which puzzled everyone, most of all Mother who could see no connection between that study and a writing career. But Mary argued, "English I can study by myself: for science I have to have laboratories and a teacher."

She found much more intellectual freedom in Blackburn than in the Normal School. It was a small college and the instructors were intelligent men, well versed in their subjects. This was Mary's first contact with teaching by direct observation and experiment, which proved to be the right method for her and one which she never ceased to use.

Being in a small university was a distinct advantage for the contacts it offered. There was one professor who was a visiting lecturer in the Science Department.

He talked on the adaptation of flowers and insects, and made field trips with his class. Mary was the only one of the class who was interested and enjoyed the rare privilege of accompanying him on those jaunts, following a trail that broadened as it went on so that ever after her happiest relaxation from the world was to leave everything else and walk in it.

While at Blackburn Mary was already establishing a literary reputation. Her contributions to the college paper, the *Blackburnian*, were enthusiastically commented upon and she was made the class poet.

Mathematics was a subject which continually intrigued and baffled her. Whatever she accomplished in that science she realized was more through the liberality of her teachers regarding her understanding of calculus than any brilliance which she displayed in the subject. Yet there was nothing which she so earnestly wished to master. It gave her the feeling of immensity of space, a spiritual outlet, a sense of the rhythm of time, something outside of and beyond the stated problem.

Of all the authors whom Mary read and studied during this time Emerson was the one who most influenced her literary style. This influence was shown in her contributions to the *Blackburnian*. It was due, in part at least, to the fact that the death of Emerson in '82 had caused his work to be read and discussed and had renewed that companionship with Father when Mary found Emerson's Poems, and *Representative Men* among his books. Then, too, Betty Mathews, who had been her mother's boon companion in school and who persisted in predicting that Mary would some day have literary success, gave her a two-volume set of the correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle.

All the time that I-Mary in college was finding what she wanted to do and how she planned to accomplish it, Mary-by-herself was suffering from a feeling of inferiority that was the cause of much unhappiness. She had been made to believe that she was unattractive. It was true that malaria had left its sallowness and she was far too thin by the accepted standards of feminine pulchritude in the '80's. The slenderness that would have been admired in later years made her figure, or lack of it, a sorry foundation for the basques and bustles and corsets that fitted like the paper on the wall to a form sadly lacking in bust and hips, and Mary refused to wear "forms."

Her hair which was abundant and beautiful was not a distinguishing asset at a time when hair was banged and frizzed or pompadoured over frames so that all hair and all heads looked alike. Her only noticeably good possession was her shapely and expressive hands.

The ideal in feminine loveliness at that time was a plump pink and white prettiness that thin, sallow Mary distressingly lacked. This, combined with painful sensitiveness and a habit of withdrawing, which appeared to come from lack of interest but in reality meant that she was afraid to show how much she was interested, repelled the young men of the period.

Part of this social unease was undoubtedly due to the fact that she had always been made to feel, after Father's death, that she was the least important member of the family group, and part of it came from the indifference of that person inside, I-Mary, to the impression that she made.

When Mother would criticize her for this lack of magnetism, she would say, "What would I do with the people after I had drawn them to me?" So it happened

that Mary was considered "odd" and "intellectual," and the men who had grown up with her missed the sex attraction they were beginning to find in other girls and she missed the comradeship with them which she had enjoyed.

It was customary for a girl to be going with some boy, and unless one was provided with such an escort, one was left to tag along with a brother in the event that his girl was kind enough to allow it, or impose one's presence on some girl friend who had a steady, or go about with a group of girls who were without escorts. This lack of being chosen daunted the stoutest feminine heart, as did the tragic prospect of being an "Old Maid."

Mary's social ambitions were further handicapped by Mrs. Hunter's choice of eligible young men. Mary was first attracted to a youth who wore bright neckties and smoked cigars, an attraction which her mother discouraged by such evident preference for divinity students as suitors that the young man ceased his attentions.

Mary, sufficiently indifferent to avoid opposing Mother, started going with a worthy young man who was studying for the ministry, as serious-minded as was usual with young men who felt they had received a call. He finally did her the great honor of telling her that he had found she met all the requirements that he felt a preacher's wife should have and he had decided that they might as well become engaged.

Mary experienced the same promptings as when years before she had said the Lord's Prayer backwards in order to avoid going to heaven. She hesitated to hurt him by telling him she would rather be dead than married to him. Instead she cleverly resorted to the device of disagreeing with him on some of the fundamental doctrines of the church. They finally arrived at

the parting of the ways over the question of Infant Damnation. The serious-minded young man, shocked by her laxity in religious matters, withdrew his suit.

Fortunately another divinity student of less binding convictions was accepted as her escort for the following two years and enabled her to fulfill the social requirements of going with someone. He was companionable, but he never measured up to the stature of a man with whom Mary felt she could approach the unity marriage should mean: "A way of Life, a Child, a common attack upon the Wilderness." Sometime later the young man proposed to her but the social emergency having passed, she was no longer interested.

When Jim graduated from college he found that his degree carried no assurance of being able to make a living, and that his finances were exhausted. Not that he was lacking in visions of what he would like to do and be. He thought of himself as owning a farm and leading the life of a gentleman farmer. He dreamed of studying medicine and becoming a famous surgeon.

Mrs. Hunter opposed him in this ambition, although friends of the family offered to advance funds for a medical education. She had never had much faith in medicine, and had never called a doctor until forced to do so by the urgency of her neighbors. Now the idea of keeping Jim in school on borrowed money that must be paid back seemed an intolerable burden to her. Most important of all, it was evident that Jim had become such a necessary factor in her life that she dared not face the possibility of separation that might come through the study and practice of a profession so foreign to her experience.

It transpired that Jim was not so much interested in

the science of medicine as he was in picturing himself a Country Doctor, important to people, close to them, in their confidence. He finally ended up by teaching school that first winter after graduation.

In the meantime Grandpa Graham died and the last strand in the cord that had held the Dugger clan together was severed. Other pioneer families of Macoupin County were breaking up. Some of the Dugger relatives moved to Oregon and California.

Letters came from Uncle George Dugger in California: letters that were to determine the destiny of the family. They told glowing tales of the wonderful opportunities of fertile government land, open to settlement by the simple process of homesteading.

The result was that when Jim's term of teaching was finished he left for California. Mrs. Hunter's distress over being separated from her son was imposed on the family to the exclusion of everything and everyone else. Life became a succession of waiting for letters, walking the floor, weeping at night, the joyous relief of receiving a letter which was read over and over again to anyone who would listen, answering the letter, waiting.

Mrs. Hunter decided that the family should move to Jim in California as soon as Mary had finished college. There may have been something of the pioneer urge towards the West that Polly McAdams felt when she traveled on an ox-cart from Tennessee to Illinois. Whatever motivated her, the house on Johnson Street was rented, the furniture sold or shipped, and the family traveled tourist to San Francisco.

They were equipped with baskets packed with food to last the journey; fried chicken, ham, loaves of bread, jars of butter, jellies and jams, cakes, doughnuts and

cookies. Each basket was labeled so that the most perishable articles could be consumed first. Although there was no plush upholstery the cane-covered seats were comfortable. There were arrangements for boiling water for tea and heating milk for the babies. It was all very sociable. Fellow travelers studied the railway maps and read them aloud to each other. They commented on the crops and the soil of the country through which they passed. They counted the garments on the family clotheslines of the Mormon country and hazarded a guess as to whether they were a polygamous household.

Finally, having apparently run out of subjects of general conversation, the confusion died down to some extent and from Salt Lake to Sacramento Mary was able to collect her thoughts and consider what this move might mean. She had not been consulted about it, had not been given a chance to approve or endeavor to dissuade. But that did not matter. She felt that she would have as good an opportunity in California as any place else of earning a living by teaching until she could support herself by writing.

She had read Bret Harte and Helen Hunt Jackson and knew something of the romantic background of the Golden State.

The only reason Mary found for opposing Mother's plan was that she thought Jim should be allowed freedom to make his own life and that Mrs. Hunter would be happier to remain in the house that she had built, surrounded by her friends and social activities, the W. C. T. U. and the Church. Mary had already developed the story-teller's talent for dissecting human emotions and situations. She realized the importance of background for her mother.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LANDSCAPE GREW INCREASINGLY UN-familiar to the Hunter family who were being transplanted from their Middlewest background. As the miles sped behind them and, beyond the Great Salt Lake, the desert stretched illimitably to strange horizons, Mary experienced a feeling that in that brooding, seemingly unfriendly waste lay something that beckoned to her. It was not with the friendly call of wooded hills and winding streams but with a mysterious aloofness that fired her imagination and filled her with a desire to explore and interpret that mystery. Something was there that spoke to her, a foreigner, in a language she could understand.

Contrary to the experience of most women transplanted from a less austere background, Mary was never afraid of the desert, and always came back to it for inspiration and courage. Years later she was to write in *The Land of Journey's Ending*,* "—the secret charm of the desert is the secret of life triumphant."

But this was not the desert of their destination and the train sped on through Reno, Nevada, over the Donner Pass to San Francisco, where another of the numerous Marys of the Dugger clan was raising her family in one of many tall, thin houses, overgrown with fuschias and geraniums.

Aunt Mary's husband and the cousins and friends of the family all combined with enthusiasm in showing

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Susanna Hunter and her brood a good time. San Francisco was turned before Mary's fascinated eyes as one turns a kaleidoscope: the Golden Gate, the Cliff House, Chinatown and her first introduction to tea in the afternoon, and the Chinese Theater where Mary felt like the Alice whose travels in Wonderland had so intrigued her in the old days. There were also restaurants where, in spite of scruples instilled in early childhood, she sipped dago red and found that there was nothing to resist since she did not like it, but did like the carefree atmosphere of the place and the stained glass pattern that the wine cast on the tablecloth.

But most alluring of all was the Matinee Parade, where she found herself a part of the throng wending its way home or in the direction of the Poodle Dog or Coppa's or another of the famous restaurants; gay, merry, in a way that only pre-earthquake San Francisco knew.

Small wonder that sallow, flat-chested Mary was filled with admiration for the tall, full-bosomed women whose faces glowed with the rosy complexions for which San Francisco women are noted, and whose clothes not only covered but adorned them, enhancing the bountiful charms bestowed by the brisk winds and soft fogs of their native land. Colorful they were as the flower stands and the dazzling shop windows that formed a background for this afternoon procession.

A newspaper man, a friend of the family, piloted Mary along Bush Street to Portsmouth Square, promising to introduce her to the writer, Robert Louis Stevenson, should they be so fortunate as to meet him where he lived and wrote. But Mary was apprehensive of how she should meet a man who, she was told, drank much wine and went about with nicotine-stained fingers.

Enough of the Blue Ribbon, Band of Hope loyalty and the Frances Willard influence remained to stiffen Mary's back at such revelations. But when she was assured that he habitually wore dandruff on his collar and went about with his nails as heavily edged with black as a piece of mourning stationery, she refused to believe any of the tales, sure that one who could write a *Treasure Island* would not be guilty of such lapses in common decency. At any rate, her credulity was not put to the test as they did not meet him. She was later to learn that personal cleanliness seems neither to add to nor detract from literary integrity.

Leaving Russian and Telegraph Hills and Mount Tamalpias behind, the Hunter family sailed out of the Golden Gate, heading south towards cousin George Dugger and Jim in Los Angeles.

Los Angeles, with its remnants of the old Spanish occupation in the plaza of the Church of the Angels where the soft Spanish tongue was still spoken, its adobe haciendas elbowing the less intriguing American houses, its roses and pepper trees, its exploiting of land, of houses, even of the romantic traditions and buildings of Junipero Serra, was all puzzling and rather terrifying to Mary. Anxiously she questioned how far Tejon, the place which Jim had selected for their homesteading adventure, was from San Francisco, for she felt that must be her objective if the homesteading project proved a failure.

She was impatient to be on the way and glad when the camping outfit was assembled and the family started on the hundred-mile trek which would consume six or seven days.

Finally the boom towns were left behind and they

came to ranches with adobe houses where the chili drying on the walls and the gnarled old grapevines gave evidence that remnants of the original Spanish families still remained on the land and honestly tilled the soil.

The houses grew fewer with greater distances between and the road rambled along dry stream beds that Jim said were called arroyos and were filled with rushing torrents at certain seasons of the year. Arroyo, manzanita, San Francisquita canyon, there was something very alluring to Mary in the soft Spanish names, something, too, in the pungent odors, the tall yuccas, heavy with blossoms that lighted the hillsides with Candles of our Lord, and in the unaccustomed wild life, quail, horned toads, rabbits, shy desert creatures scurrying to the shelter of chaparral, that made Mary long to be alone with it. Surely nymphs and satyrs, even Pan himself, might appear if only she could loiter awhile and find the hidden meaning of this menacing and starkly beautiful land.

But the family were on their way to Tejon and the San Joaquin Valley and had no time to squander on foolish imaginings. "Someday," she promised herself, not foreseeing the long road, full of responsibility and necessity that precluded a search in the arroyo for the pipes of Pan.

The road to Tejon ran by an old stage station where Mary met the first one of those desert characters of whom she was to write so convincingly in later years. It was Three-fingered Bob who told them that in Antelope Valley through which they passed the wind blew so hard that it battered up the end of crowbars. This added to the apprehension already felt by Mother who had been thoroughly alarmed by a bear that came down

to where they were camped under the oaks and after that could only sleep in her out-of-doors bed when Jim and Mary took turns lying awake to protect her.

In the fall of 1888, after several minor adventures, the Hunter family reached Tejon Pass and camped that night at Fort Tejon. Jim had learned something of the history of the place and as the light from their camp-fire illumined the old parade ground and fell fitfully on the walls of the crumbling adobe buildings, Mary heard the story of how the Indians of the tribes of Central California had been gathered together in a reservation on Ranchos Tejon, making it the first semi-military, semi-agricultural reservation established for them. Since a military post was always established near a reservation, the post for Ranchos Tejon was placed seventeen miles away in the Canada de las Uvas, or Grape Vine Canyon.

For ten years a company of the first dragoons of the U. S. Army remained at the post which became a center for the political and social life of the South San Joaquin, and the name Tejon Pass came to be used for that portion of the way leading into Canada de las Uvas.

Now all that remained was the empty parade ground, worn smooth by marching feet, the old adobe buildings, fast falling into ruins, and a broken headstone which marked the spot where an officer of the U. S. Army had been laid to rest under the oaks of Fort Tejon. Here, too, stood a tree which, according to tradition, had witnessed a mortal combat between that intrepid pioneer, Peter LaBec, and a bear, a combat from which the bear emerged victorious. Jim might have omitted that story as it meant sitting up with Mother.

The next morning the family assembled their camp-

ing outfit and continued on the last lap of their journey. Riding her buckskin horse slowly down the grade, Mary discovered the straight line of a disused road that Jim said was the route of the United States Mail Coach Line that had once gone that way into the Valley of the San Joaquin.

When they came out from the pass and looked for the first time across the valley, Jim explained the topography of that country where Susanna Hunter was destined to spend the remainder of her days, and where Mary was to find an inspiration in nature and the ways of its creatures. It was here too that pudgy little George was to grow to tall, handsome manhood and Jim was to live and raise his family in the valley that lay between the mountain ranges that towered, snow-capped, to lofty horizons.

To the west lay the road that cut through those mountains to El Camino Real and the mission towns that lay along the coast. To the east the Tehachapi Pass cleft the peaks where the railroad ran through connecting the valley with Los Angeles by rail, while the way which they were traveling, through the Tejon Pass was the one built to connect the settlements that grew wherever a stream emerged into the valley. It was the road that ran to Bakersfield, the source of supplies and center of social activities for all the settlers along the Tejon.

At the foot of the grade lay Ranchos El Tejon, its barbed wire fences enclosing thirty thousand acres. Beyond that stretched a belt of arid land dotted with the cabins of homesteaders who had been lured by the magic word, irrigation, and knowing little or nothing of the means to bring it about, had been made to believe

that canals which could and would never be built in this locality, would bring about the miracle.

It was here that Jim had acquired three quarter sections. Two cabins were already built, one on Mother's, one on Jim's holdings. Since Mary's was a timber claim it required no building.

A homesteader's cabin consisted of one room with bunks for sleeping, a door and one or more windows. It was in Jim's cabin that Susanna Hunter and her family settled down to establish their homestead rights. Father's service time in the army was deducted from the time necessary to "hold down" a claim.

Stunted sagebrush grew to the door. There were no trees. The late summer heat seemed to be held in by the low hills that rose on either side and the sandy dunes that separated the homesteader's strip of land from the valley proper.

But, nothing daunted, the Hunters made the acquaintance of their neighbor homesteaders and assumed their share of foraging for wood in the canyons, water from the waterholes, and supplies and mail from Bakersfield, thirty miles across desert sand.

In those days the pioneer women managed some gaiety to offset the awful tragedy of failure of crops, lack of water, fever and ague, and the state of being poverty poor.

Susanna Hunter was not to be outdone by her neighbors. She would start Jim out in the morning on horseback to ride to the homes of the other settlers and tell them that there would be a candy pull at the Hunters' that night. All the people for miles came in buckboards or on horseback. Susanna made them feel so at home that they loved to be with her.

Finding these young people not quite the sort that she and Jim had been accustomed to, Mary did not fit into the new environment as easily as Jim. She was proud of her cooking ability and she made the candy, seeming to know intuitively just the proportions of sugar and water, vinegar and butter that went into the mixture, and just when it had cooked long enough over the crackling pine-wood fire so that, cooled, it could be pulled to the silver whiteness of delectable taffy. But while the others pulled the candy and played "spin the plate" and "drop the handkerchief," she would wander out of doors, more at home with the desert and the stars and the horizon of snow-capped mountains than with those healthy, noisy young people.

The Hunter family, like their neighbors, attempted to establish homes according to government requirements. They raised stone monuments at the four corners of their land. When spring came, Jim plowed and planted on soil so dry that no seed would sprout. Mary managed to keep a few cottonwood slips alive by hoarding of water.

When it was necessary for Mrs. Hunter to spend some time on her homestead in order to acquire title to the property, Mary went with her. She was enchanted by these excursions. The cabin was in a sandy wash and when Mother was asleep, Mary would let down her heavy hair, an act which always gave her a peculiar sense of freedom. Then she would steal out and sit very quietly in the moonlight until the desert creatures, grown accustomed to her presence, would go about their usual nocturnal occupations. A frisking of sand and a field mouse or kangaroo rat scampered by. A whispering rus-

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tle and a red fox passed. Elf-owls winged their amorous flights undisturbed by her presence.

Mary slept little. When morning came she was out again, studying the habits of a bobcat who made his lair in the warm, dry sand on the bank of the wash, hiding along the trail where a band of antelope passed on their way from their water-hole to the feeding ground on the Tejon range.

Once when a sudden storm broke, she took refuge in a settler's shack and found a lone buck from the herd already there. They stayed until the storm was over, neither of them disturbed by the other's presence. It was of this buck that she wrote the story of *The Last Antelope* several years later.

Occasionally someone saw Mary wandering about with her hair down, and tongues began to wag. Why should any young girl go skirting around in the sagebrush with coyotes and horned toads, centipedes and tarantulas? There must be some reason! Eyebrows were lifted, suggestively. Why would a girl let down her hair and go wandering over the desert alone in the moonlight? Already the community had decided there was something queer about that Hunter girl!

The Hunter family arrived on the Tejon at a most inopportune time. The problem of water, always a serious one, became acute. Cattle followed the water courses until they dropped, overcome by exhaustion and thirst. They blocked the trails with skeletons whose skulls and unseeing eyes still pointed up trail to the source of streams that had worn a water course now dry and parched as they.

The barbed wire that fenced the Ranchos Tejon was

cut and the cattle allowed to roam on government land. The Tejon management paid the settlers a small sum for whatever grass the starved animals might be able to find on their holdings. It also employed men and horses to drive the still living and drag the carcasses away from the settlers' water barrels. The remuneration for these services and for the parched grass consumed was all the income that the settlers had.

They plowed and planted, still hoping vainly for rain, while gophers and kangaroo rats stalked the furrows and carried away the seeds.

The revolting task of keeping the cattle away from the Hunters' water barrel fell to Mary and George. A task that was undertaken under the shadow of buzzards that soared and wheeled and made the air horrible with their croaking.

Cordelia N. Mostler, who is still living in Bakersfield, tells a stirring story of those days. She was homesteading a claim about eight miles distant from her neighbors, the Hunters. She was alone at night. She heard the cattle coming and knew they had scented her water barrels and would crush her cabin like cardboard and trample her fields and outbuildings to dust.

Taking her gun she stood on the cabin porch and shot into the herd, an act permissible only as a last resort. While the cattle were dazed from the shot she got on her horse with a lantern. Shouting and shooting, she saved the place from a stampede. It is a red-blooded story as she tells it; something to make one thrill to the adventurous blood of the pioneer.

If Mary had been strong and well like that neighbor homesteader, eight miles away, she might have commanded the admiration and respect of the husky young

settlers who were scattered along the fringe of El Tejon, but she grew thin to emaciation and became so depleted of strength that even the weight of her hair above her wan and sallow face gave her the appearance of stooping.

Her emotions were always stronger than her physique. Her reaction to Father's and Jennie's death, her secret, unrequited longing to be closer to her mother and an essential part of the family circle, the strain of finishing a four-year college course in two years, the hurried tearing up of the roots she had put down around old associations, the change to the California surroundings and climate which proved enervating to her, all resulted in a state of physical and mental depression that verged on collapse.

She suffered acutely from malnutrition. The settlers were unable to raise any green vegetables. The only ones to be had came from Bakersfield and commanded prices which the settlers could ill afford to pay. Canned fruit and vegetables were still looked upon with suspicion. There was no butter and the canned milk, diluted with water hauled from a water hole, shallow and brackish from the dry season, was unpalatable.

There was no meat. Rabbits and quail were plentiful in the valley and venison and bear meat were brought down from the mountains by old men who had been left over from the days of the gold rush.

Mary was a good shot, and, with George to help her, it fell to her lot to furnish rabbit for the Hunters' table. She spent hours tramping through the sagebrush and mesquite, hating to kill the timid, harmless creatures. She learned as she afterwards wrote in *The Land of Lit-*

*the Rain** that, "Rabbits are a foolish people. They do not fight except with their own kind, nor use their paws except for feet, and appear to have no reason for existence but to furnish meals for meat-eaters." Mary did not like game and sickened on the monotonous food.

Mother was exasperated with her: "You're just being squeamish, Mary. There is no use humoring yourself." And Jim added, "I guess she could eat if she wanted to. The way to get an appetite is to miss a few meals." Then Mother would say, "I can't help but think if you would arouse yourself to take some interest in things. . . ." She did not realize that for awhile Mary's interest was all that kept her going, an unremitting interest in the strange desert plants, a desire not to miss anything significant in tracks of animals or flights of birds; things that no one seemed able to explain to her.

The young people along the Tejon who were fond of Mrs. Hunter and felt that Mary did not help her as much as she should, translated malnutrition as laziness, and felt that because she was a college graduate she held herself better than they and above doing the things that fell to the settler's lot.

After two years of fruitless endeavor, the Hunter family recognized their homesteading project as a failure and moved to Rose Station. General Beale, the owner of El Tejon Ranchos, whose sympathies were aroused by the plight of the settlers, made arrangements for them as well as for others who were established at Fort Tejon.

Although the stage line which used to run through Rose Station was discontinued, there was water and cultivated land around it, and travelers going that way would stop for hay for their horses and for meals.

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After the move to Rose Station Mrs. Hunter was able to go to Bakersfield and resume her church affiliation and W. C. T. U. activities. The family would be aroused at daybreak. Lunch would be prepared and she would insist on driving those thirty miles to Bakersfield with a horse and buckboard to teach her Sunday School class.

Retired business men and women who are now grandmothers remember her. "She was a grand woman!" they say, and tell how she stood up in her black alpaca dress and talked to them, striving earnestly to convict them of sin and show them the way of salvation. Not one of the Bakersfield young people, most of whom were not churchgoers, would willingly miss her class.

Although Mary could never feel as her mother did about the church and had failed to find the Presence there as she had fervently hoped to, she went with the family, partly because Mother expected her to, partly to satisfy a longing for the companionship of congenial young people, a companionship that Mary-by-herself craved, even when I-Mary assured her that she was quite indifferent to people and to whether they liked her or not.

The young people liked Jim. He was handsome, care-free, hail-fellow-well-met.

Mary took life and religion seriously. Jim's nonchalant attitude irritated her and they disagreed as brothers and sisters frequently do. Perhaps Mary was jealous of Jim's easy social success, for none of the younger set liked Mary. She was not attractive physically, and that was the main avenue of approach in those days. A girl was pretty or she wasn't pretty. If she was not, there were always ways and means by ruffles and bows and bangs

by which she could be rendered passably so. But the Hunter family were poor. Mary had no pretty clothes to relieve the plain homeliness of her face or enhance the real beauty of her glorious hair. Then, too, her mother was a Methodist and Mary had never learned to dance. Since dancing was the one absorbing pastime this was a distinct disadvantage.

She was grudgingly invited to their parties only when mothers insisted that she be made welcome because of their friendship and admiration for her mother. She was shabby and homely and, with the cruelty of youth, the girls palmed her off on the least desirable young men who resented both Mary and the trick by which they found themselves in her company.

Young men were ill at ease with "different" girls. They demanded that girls be pretty or at least full of fun. Mary was inclined to be serious. "Come," she would say, "let us sit and talk. We haven't had a visit together." In the midst of a party where she found herself very much out of things and, consequently unhappy, she would try to interest them in the only way she knew. His thoughts evidently wandering, the young man would allow himself to be talked to, never realizing that Mary was endeavoring to reveal herself as someone more attractive, more worth while than those who had mere prettiness to offer.

All her life Mary enjoyed talking to men more than she did to women. The masculine approach to any problem, the masculine viewpoint was more interesting than the feminine.

But the girls at these parties made up their minds that she was boy-crazy and let it go at that.

While all these things were happening to Mary, she drew more and more into herself and, people not understanding, considered it a pose. Their attitude puzzled her and gave her that little girl feeling of loneliness that she had first known at her mother's knee.

Those things that Mary found so fascinating in the desert country held small interest for the young people with whom she was associated. One has only to read the issues of the *Kern County Californian*, 1888, to find what activities engaged the minds of the people and how their needs were supplied. There are advertisements of Horticultural Land Brokers, Well Boring, Buckeye Mowers, Rakes and Wagons, Milling Companies, Blacksmiths, horse-shoeing a specialty, Stock Salt and all kinds of sheep-dips, sheep shears, wool-bags, twine, Livery and Feed stables, Hamburg Tea, a guaranteed cure for all the ills that human flesh is heir to ("Many a fond mother, mourning the loss of loved ones, and questioning the goodness of Providence in dealing with them, might have retained their darling still, had they known the wonderful virtues and made the proper use of Frese's Hamburg Teal").

With her literary background of *Alice in Wonderland*, *Old Red Sandstone*, Ruskin and Emerson, Mary found it difficult to be interested in the Latest Issues of Lovell's Library which the young people and their elders read for diversion:

The Great Hesper, Barrett; *The Squire's Daughter*, Bertha Clay; *Pirates of the Prairie*, Amard; *On Her Wedding Day*, Bertha Clay; *The Shattered Idol*, Bertha Clay; *Letty Leigh*, Bertha Clay.

Poems in the *Kern County Californian* were copied

from the leading magazines: *Century*, *Frank Leslie's*,
Home Journal.

"With sorrow in her eyes of blue"

*"I was so tired of Jack, poor boy,
And Jack was tired of me."*

*"It is not true that joy lies dead
Although today our hearts have bled
For me and you—it is not true—"*

Perhaps it was her revolt against this insistent utilitarianism and mawkish sentimentalism that stimulated in Mary Hunter the growth of that literary style whose flawless English and rhythmic prose poems made her outstanding among the writers of her generation.

CHAPTER IX

THE HOMESTEADERS ON EL TEJON AND the settlers in Bakersfield were not unkind. On the contrary, they were as hospitable and charitable as the pioneers of any section. The very name, Bakersfield, carries with it the flavor of the spirit that prevailed among the early settlers and the generosity that spread a mantle over the neighbor in distress.

The story runs that weary travelers urged on their almost exhausted teams, saying, "If we can only make Colonel Baker's field!" The gossip along the roads assured them that there they would find alfalfa, corn, berries, plenty of water, Indian servants.

When they finally reached the large, rambling house, they would go in and say, "Well, Colonel, where do you want us to camp?"

He would direct them to the field where they could turn their stock, tell them to help themselves to fruit and vegetables, anything in season, which would be augmented from the well-filled larder of the house. There was never any charge. When one field was eaten off he would fence that in and open up another.

In this same house of Colonel Baker, there was a large and lusty family and a mother whose heart went out to the young people who lived on the scattered ranches, seeing the good things of life but having so few of them. She loved to have them gather around until the house was filled to overflowing. Girls slept together on the floor, whispering precious secrets. Because Mrs.

Baker was fond of Susanna Hunter, she insisted that Mary be invited, which was a sore trial to the daughter of the family who always had to sleep with her because the others refused.

As a mark of disapproval Mary was given the bed to sleep in. The daughter of the house would go to bed with her but later would take her pillow and whatever bedclothes she could find and sleep on the floor with the others.

Goaded to say unkind things because of the real suffering in her own heart, Mary criticized the girls and their clothes.

"She don't like them because she is just jealous!" they decided among themselves and reacted in quite a natural way by disliking her more than ever.

She became a real trial to Colonel Baker's daughter. When she complained her mother would say, "Mary has some very good qualities."

"Yes, Mother, but she keeps them so well hidden that no one ever knows it."

About this time Mary learned that a group of young people who called themselves the Fox Tail Rangers were on a camping party at El Tejon. She rode out to join them. They were of the upper-crust of Bakersfield society, properly chaperoned, well equipped with horses for riding and Chinese cooks for the camp.

When Mary appeared they were starting out for a day on the trail. Deciding that they did not want her along, they simply rode off and left her alone in the camp. It was a cruel thing to do, and they knew it.

When they returned after having spent the day, they found Mary sitting on a rock near a bridge in the parade grounds, busy with her pad and pencil. They resented

finding her absorbed in what she was doing and apparently indifferent to the fact that they had deliberately snubbed her. So they said among themselves that she had posed by the bridge with the tobacco plant making a charming background—all for effect, and the pad and pencil were just to show how superior she felt.

Things must have gone badly for Mary at this time had it not been for the arrival of General Beale, the owner of the combined ranches of Tejon, La Liebre and Castac. There was an English superintendent in charge of the property who looked upon the settlers along its borders as intruders and only endured them with the hope that they would soon become discouraged and give up whatever they had accomplished with the land so that eventually it would become the property of Ranchos Tejon at little or no expense. General Beale made his home in Washington, but one fortuitous day he visited his holdings in Kern County and a new world opened for Mary.

He was friendly and kind to the settlers and, finding Mary Hunter an interesting young woman, where others considered her only queer, he instructed Don José Lopez, major-domo of the cattle at El Tejon, to allow her to go where she pleased and stay as long as she liked.

Don José is an old man now and lives in Bakersfield but he loves to talk of Mary Hunter. She made him quite a hero in her book, *The Flock*.* "You should have seen Don José Lopez letting his cigarette die out between his fingers as he told the story of his long drive, young vigor and the clean color of romance lightening the becoming portliness of middle years."

He tells how Mary used to come to Ranchos Tejon, sometimes riding horseback, more often driving a buckboard. He never remembers seeing her without a pad or pencil in her hands. Sometimes she would sit watching everything that went on around the Ranchos, other times she would go into the canyons or washes and be gone all day.

Mary saw the creamy buds opening on the banksia-rose vines that rambled over the old adobe ranch house. She reveled in the vivid colors and lacy patterns of oleanders that warmed the gray walls. She walked in the walled garden where orange trees made a path to the spot where, beyond the walls, she could see the misty gray and green and mauve of the chamoise and chaparral of the desert.

But best and most absorbing of all was the fact that General Beale, a man of large experience and keen observation, could enlighten Mary about so many things that she had been gropingly trying to find out for herself. There were few books on the early history of California at that time, and none available to Mary, but General Beale related from personal knowledge the stories of those pioneer days.

She learned how in 1772 Don Pedro Fages, the first white man to look upon the San Joaquin Valley, came, as she had done, through Canada de las Uvas. When he beheld the wonderful valley that lay smiling between the mountains, he exclaimed, "Buena Vista!" thus bestowing the first Spanish place name in the San Joaquin Valley.

He was followed by Padre Francisco Garces, Spanish priest and Franciscan friar, explorer and missionary to the Indians, who traveled from Yuma to the Mojave

River, to San Gabriel, to the valley that was later to be known as the San Joaquin by way of Tejon Creek, and back to Yuma through the Mojave desert. The river that was afterwards known as the Kern, and called by the Indians Rio Bravo, he christened Rio de San Felipe. His ecclesiastical and geographical records of the journey read like a romance and caused him to be known as the American Marco Polo.

But it remained for Gabriel Moraga, son of the Moraga who had accompanied the famous explorer, Anza, on his expeditions, to name the valley. He penetrated the range of mountains which had checked the passage of his father and Anza, by way of Mount Hamilton and Livermore Pass and beheld a wide spreading plain. Reaching the river he named it and the valley San Joaquin, after the saint whose name his father bore.

It was in 1833 that Joseph Walker found a new pass into the valley which became known as Walker Pass. Not long after that came Peter La Bec, a Hudson Bay Company trapper, hero of the bear story that Jim had told Mary and Mother the night they made camp at Fort Tejon.

Captain John Frémont arrived with his expedition in 1845 and renamed the river Kern, in honor of Lieutenant Kern, topographer of the outfit. It was Sebastiano, one of the Mission Indians who had escaped to the San Joaquin Valley and El Tejon, who told Mary the story of how he had ferried General Frémont across the Kern on his back when the swollen streams rushing down from the mountains had made fording the stream a dangerous business.

Names of people and of events of which she had heard meager mention came alive for Mary as she sat, listening

intently to that rare storyteller, General Beale, and looking, as her family complained of her at such times, "as if she weren't all there at all."

Mary's never failing interest in the Indians was first stimulated by General Beale as he told of gathering together the remnants of the tribes onto the Tejon reservation after the Indian wars and teaching them the art of irrigation to which they were naturally adapted.

She treasured the bell and the bell-cord that had encircled the neck of one of the camels whose herd had been intrusted to Beale by Jefferson Davis with the intention of making it the chief means of transportation for the Great American Desert. She heard how Beale drove his team of camels, hitched tandem to a sulky, to Los Angeles, one hundred miles away, talking to them in Syrian which he had acquired for the purpose, while his son, Truxton Beale, destined to become diplomatic representative from the United States to Persia, sat proudly beside him.

That bell and cord hung later on the door of Mary Austin's house at Carmel and curious ones, seeing it and not knowing what it was, went away to snicker over the cow's tail that Mary Austin had hung on her door.

But that was many years after she sat in the shade of the old adobe ranch house at El Tejon and heard again the story that had traveled the length and breadth of California. The story of how President Lincoln, after making Beale Surveyor General of California and Nevada, said with his droll wit, "I couldn't reappoint Beale Surveyor General because he became monarch of all he surveyed!"

General Beale enjoyed that story as much as anyone, knowing that his immense holdings had been acquired

honestly from people who had not been sufficiently interested in the Spanish grants that had been so generously handed out to them even to take the trouble to go and see the property which they were told lay in a country infested by marauding Indians, a country where no white man could live!

With supreme indifference to the possibilities of verifying these rumors, they were willing to sell their holdings for anything they would bring, the agreed price of fifty cents an acre being so much to the good in their estimation.

When the Civil War was over General Beale resigned as Surveyor General. He retired to a camp by a spring where he planted the vines and fig trees that now gave such luxuriant shade and delicious fruit to the owner of an estate one half as large as Rhode Island.

At that time a sheep was worth more than an acre of land. Eventually Beale acquired immense bands of sheep, one hundred thousand, one hundred and twenty-five thousand. It was from him that Mary first learned of the ways of sheep and their herders, and the vigilance of the dogs that made the long journey to the summer feeding grounds with them. She talked with the herders who had taken out the sheep in those days, making dry camp after dry camp, one day so like another that there was nothing to mark their passing.

It was the superintendent at El Tejon who told Mary of a dog who would bring a bunch of muttons safely to the home corral from any point on the range.

An old sheep dog who basked in the sun, his days of active service over, had been sent out one time to hunt for strays. When he did not return a herder went out and found him watching over a ewe and her twin lambs. A coyote lay dead not far away and the dog was licking

some wounds that had evidently been inflicted during the battle. The lambs were but a few hours old and the dog had undoubtedly stood guard during the accouchement and remained to protect the little family until help should arrive.

Mary was fascinated by these stories of a life so foreign to anything she had ever known. Unconsciously she was beginning the gathering of material that would go into the making of one of her most successful books, *The Flock*.

General Beale had been a personal friend of many of the great men of his time. He had known General Grant when they were boys together in San Francisco and walked the Long Wharf, eating their meals in the What Cheer House when the fame and the future of that city were still in the making. In later life he had been appointed by that boyhood friend as Minister Plenipotentiary to Austria. His home in Washington, which he purchased soon after the war, was the Decatur mansion on Lafayette Square within a stone's throw of the White House. Nevertheless his affection for and interest in the companions of his early days was unfailing. Men of wealth and power meant no more to him than Old Bill Skinner, Colonel Baker, who gave his name to Bakersfield; and Bishop, in whose name town in Inyo County Mary was to spend the years of her married life.

It seemed to Mary there was nothing General Beale did not know or had not seen or had not been a party to since Pio Pico's time. All the things that had baffled her and left her following mental trails that led nowhere were understandingly explained. He was able to procure government documents, old accounts of military explorations, agricultural reports and reports of geological surveys and botanical research for her.

Through the understanding interest and friendship of General Beale Mary's literary genius became focused on the Western Scene which her books were so vividly to portray.

Finding herself relieved of the strain of trying to know the country, Mary was able to relax and enjoy it. She walked or rode horseback over the desert every day. She saw how the promise of spring was broken as the dry season advanced. She made the acquaintance of Indians, sheep-herders, *vaqueros*. She was an interested spectator at brandings, sheep-shearings and *bailes*. Strange and gossip-stimulating things for a young woman to do unchaperoned, and a cause of much anxiety to Mrs. Hunter who tearfully confided to her dearest friends her bewilderment over this "queer" member of the family.

But Mary was enjoying herself as she never had done before. She discovered winery clusters of wild grapes in Canada de las Uvas and after a week or two of eating little else her health was so much better that she told the family what had brought about the cure.

"So like Mary," they commented, "to starve to death on a proper Christian diet and go and get well on something grubbed out of the woods."

But Mary had made a discovery, that a poor appetite of any sort can be cured by its proper food; that it isn't necessary to be heroic or a martyr, but only to get out and hunt for a remedy.

Although her physical condition improved, Mary was unhappy over spiritual matters. She rebelled against the formalized religion which her mother found so satisfying. She suffered from the benumbing sense of having lost the joy of the Presence.

But the following spring the beauty of nature, which

never failed to release her from the effects of unhappy environment, brought spiritual health. While walking and leading her horse past nemophilia and lupine as blue as fallen skies she happened suddenly on poppies, bedded in the sand and sending up slender stems to burst in orange-hued flame.

She was in a quiet mood, a mood of which she later wrote in *Can Prayer Be Answered?*¹ "Meditation is the first of a series of religiously effective states of mind, and anything that cuts you off from habitual mental attitudes of mind and lets you go free toward pure meditation is indispensable to the opening movement of prayer."

So it came about that Mary, surrounded by the beauty and quietness of the April morning, was conscious once more of that Presence, something kindly and alive. The long drought of the spirit that had begun when she had tried to find the Joy of the Lord in organized religion was broken by the refreshing reality of an enveloping and sustaining power. She knew it would never leave her again; never be beyond her power to recall it.

There is a very close bond existing between these illuminating flashes of spiritual awareness and Mary Austin's interpretation of her creative genius. In *Earth Horizon*² she says, "Without apparently having any choice about it, progress has meant for her [Mary] a series of forward flashes, long spells of concentrated observation, patient, even anguished inquiry, and sudden thunder, lightning, rainbow and the sound of wings." Mary had undoubtedly come on countless other beautiful scenes which did not affect her in the same way as this burst of flame from the slender stems of the poppies.

¹ *Can Prayer Be Answered?* Copyright, Farrar & Rinehart, Inc.

² *Earth Horizon*, Copyright, Houghton Mifflin Co.

CHAPTER X

THERE HAD BEEN LITTLE FINANCIAL GAIN to the Hunter family in the move to Rose Station, yet it was an improvement in many ways. Living was more comfortable and Mother was more content. Buoyed up at first by the excitement and the adventure of homesteading, she had fought back the homesickness for the place where she had married, raised her family and been surrounded by friends and relatives.

But when the fact that the homesteading venture was not a success was forced upon her, nostalgia engulfed her. The out-of-doors that held so much enchantment for Mary did not interest her mother. The activities of the church and the W. C. T. U. which had provided an outlet for her social needs were so far away, and the people, although kind, so removed from the familiar faces of her old home, that she felt herself a stranger in a strange land.

But the rambling thick-walled old adobe that had been the stage station had possibilities of hominess. There were two gnarled grapevines, one twined over the low front stoop, another vigilantly embracing the back of the old house and holding the walls together. Several fig trees, decrepit, but staunchly fighting against lack of water and human interest, had managed to hold their own. There was even a chinaberry tree.

The large barn, so weathered that it shone like silver in the desert sun, stood in the midst of corrals where stage horses had formerly found a much needed rest.

The Butterfield Overland Mail, passing through San Joaquin Valley on its way from Los Angeles to Visalia, listed the following stations whose names were descriptive of the kind of country through which they passed or the men who had established them:

Los Angeles	Sinks of the Tejon
Cahuenga	Kern River Slough
San Fernando Mission	Gordon's Ferry
Harts	Posey Creek
Kings	Mountain House
Widow Smith's	Fountain Springs
French John's	Tule River
Reed's Station	Packwood
Fort Tejon	

This line operated from 1856 to 1861 and was superseded by the Telegraph Stage Line of the late 60s and early 70s. The stations were farther apart. Fort Tejon was no longer a stopping place but Gordon Station and Rose Station, described as about a mile out in the San Joaquin Valley, north of Grapevine, were important stopping places.

Even though the stage lines had been discontinued, the romantic legends that had grown around them still lived. Thrilling stories were recounted of famous drivers, Ladd and Cline and many others, cool and fearless men who held the six leather ribbons that controlled the horses, trotting, running, galloping over the road, hauling the stagecoaches, the mud wagons, the jerkys and buckboards where rich and poor, greedy and generous, saint and sinner jolted sociably together. There were songs of the days of the stagecoach:

*O, don't you remember sweet Betsy from Pike,
Who crossed the high mountains with her lover, Ike,
With two yokes of cattle, a big yellow dog,
A tall Shanghai rooster and one spotted hog.*

Cho: Tooral lal looral lal looral la la

“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “

*One evening quite early they camped on the Platte
'Twas near by the road on a green, shady flat,
When Betsy, sore-footed, lay down to repose,
With wonder Ike gazed on that Pike County rose.*

*Their wagon broke down with a terrible crash
And out on the prairie rolled all kinds of trash
A few little baby clothes done up with care
Looked very suspicious, but all on the square.*

*The Shanghai ran off and their cattle all died,
That morning the last piece of bacon was fried,
Poor Ike was discouraged and Betsy got mad
The dog dropped his tail and looked wondrously sad.*

*They stopped at Salt Lake to inquire the way
When Brigham declared that sweet Betsy should stay
Betsy got frightened and ran like a deer,
While Brigham stood pawing the ground like a steer.*

*They soon reached the desert where Betsy gave out,
And down in the sand she lay rolling about
When Ike, half distracted, looked on with surprise,
Saying, "Betsy, get up, you'll get sand in your eyes."*

*Sweet Betsy got up in a great deal of pain
Declared she'd go back to Pike County again,
But Ike gave a sign and they fondly embraced
And they traveled along with his arm round her waist.*

*They suddenly stopped on a very high hill
With wonder looked down upon old Placerville,
Ike sighed as he said, as he cast his eyes down,
"Sweet Betsy, my darling, we've got to Hangtown."*

*Long Ike and sweet Betsy attended a dance
Ike wore a pair of his Pike County pants,
Sweet Betsy was covered with ribbons and rings
Says Ike, "You're an angel, but where are your wings?"*

*A miner said, "Betsy will you dance with me?"
"I will that, old hoss, if you don't make too free.
But don't dance me hard; do you want to know why?
Dog on you—I'm chock full of alkali!*

*This Pike County couple got married, of course,
And Ike became jealous, obtained a divorce:
Sweet Betsy, well satisfied, said with a snort,
"Good-by, you big lummoX, I'm glad you backed out!"*

and the California Stage Company song to the air of
Dandy Jim of Caroline:

*There's no respect for youth or age
On board a California stage
But pull and haul about the seats
As bed bugs do among the sheets.*

*Cho: They started as a thieving line
In eighteen hundred forty nine
All "opposition" they defy
So the people must "root hog or die."*

*You're crowded in with Chinamen
As fattening pigs are in a pen
And what a man will more provoke
Is musty plug tobacco smoke.*

*The ladies are compelled to sit
With dresses in tobacco spit
The gentlemen don't seem to care
But talk on politics and swear.*

*The dust is deep in summer time
The mountains very hard to climb
The drivers often stop and yell;
"Get out all hands and push uphill."*

*The drivers when you feel inclined
Will have you walking on behind,
And on your shoulders lug a pole
To help them through some muddy hole.*

*They promise when your fare you pay
"You'll have to walk but half the way,"
Then add aside, with cunning laugh,
"You'll push and pull the other half."*

Mary loved the stories, legends and songs of her new environment. Nights when the moonlight lay white on the old barn she would seem to hear the wheels crunching in the sand. She could hear the driver of the Overland put on his brakes and wind up his long whip with

a flourish as he stopped before the hospitable adobe house while his be-dustered, be-whiskered, and bustling passengers climbed out over the wheels. She could hear him drive on to the big barn with its sweet-smelling haymow and restful shade.

Through the long, often uneventful days for Mother, Mary was busy watching the ever-changing procession of lights and shadows as they marched from peak to peak across the desert. She reveled in the brilliance of desert wildflowers in the springtime, and the golden sheen of poppies resplendent as the cloth of gold of ancient battle fields.

She chuckled over the generalship of the cock quail who marshaled his brood and taught them to fly. She knew how the antelope fared by the trails they followed to the feeding grounds. And when the aspens marched up the canyons like an army with burnished copper shields, she knew that the time was approaching when the deer would come down from the mountains and cross the valley to the pass that led to greener pastures on the other side.

She was learning to mark her days by happenings outside clocks and calenders.

*"What need has he of clocks who knows
When highest peaks are gilt and rose
Day has begun,—*

*"Let me be one who never cares
A fig for clocks and calendars,
But with never a hurry and scarcely a fear
Lives by the signs of the day and the year." **

* From *Children Sing in the Far West*, Copyright, Houghton Mifflin Co.

But Mrs. Hunter still counted by clocks and calendars. So many days passing in which nothing happened gave her too much time to brood over what seemed to her a critical situation. One day Mary found her crying under the chinaberry tree. There was something significant in Mother's having chosen that tree under which to sob out her pent-up loneliness and foreboding. The chinaberry tree was as foreign to her as all this strange, new land. It was April, the month when that tree bore a profusion of fragrant, lilac-colored flowers. Perhaps the remembrance of lilac bushes in sheltered Midwestern gardens broke down her resistance to her surroundings.

When Mary discovered her and asked her why she was crying, she answered brokenly, "Well, I've brought you out here where there is nobody of your sort to marry—"

Mary sniffed. She thought it would be perfectly easy to pick up a husband when she wanted one. Then suddenly she realized what had happened to Mother. A few days before Mary had received a letter from one of the young divinity students who had kept company with her before they left Illinois. He felt that he could now become engaged and had settled upon her as the one whom he had chosen to share his worldly affluence.

So many experiences had been crowded into the three years on El Tejon that the divinity student was only a shadowy memory, although Mary, in her polite letter of refusal of the honor he wished to bestow upon her, avoided saying that she could scarcely recall what he looked like. But Mother had been quite upset over it, and now Mary was convinced that that must be the source of her distress.

"But, Mother, you don't really want me to marry a preacher, do you?"

"Not if you don't want to."

"Then why are you crying about it?"

"Well, if you were married—I'd know where you were!"

Then Mary understood that the thing that was troubling her mother more than anything else was the feeling of insecurity. She didn't know what was going to happen. There was nothing Jim could do until he proved up on his claim and when he did the land would probably not be worth the cost involved. Besides Mother and Mary had recently been faced with the possibility of Jim's being married to some one of the young homesteading women who were more in earnest than he was.

Mary had managed to rescue him from one of these philandering courtships. The young woman felt that Jim had been dangling around long enough. She wanted to get married and her mother thought it was high time Jim should do something about it. Jim couldn't sleep nights thinking about it but he seemed as helpless as a new born babe to extricate himself from the situation.

Feeling very scornful of his male lack of initiative Mary took the matter in hand and rescued him with more efficiency than diplomacy. Jim was relieved but resentful of her interference.

It was evident that Mary should face the situation squarely. She saw that the only helpful thing she had done for more than a year had been to learn to cook Spanish style and to see that George kept up in his studies, since there was no school for him to attend.

The time was approaching when he would have to go to Bakersfield to school. Since Jim was still under the

necessity of living on his homestead for another year, he could do nothing and some girl might marry him in the meanwhile. It was apparent that any money Mary needed for herself would have to come through her own efforts.

She still planned to earn her living by writing but realized that some other activity must gap the present emergency. She got out her college text-books and notebooks and studied industriously in order to meet the requirements of the Kern County Board of Education. Then she applied for a teacher's certificate.

The owner and editor of the *Bakersfield Californian*, who was then superintendent of schools, remembers the details of that occasion, "Mary Hunter, a most unattractive young woman, came before the Board of Education of Kern County for a teacher's certificate. Her credentials were not satisfactory and she was refused. Her English requirements, language, were well enough but her mathematics were deplorable. Then, too, her personality was anything but appealing."

It was a humiliating failure but Mary, convinced that there was something to be done about unsatisfactory conditions, commented with conviction, "Some day these people will be proud to say they knew Mary Hunter!"

One of the women who passed her examination successfully at the time Mary failed says, "If she had not failed to get her teacher's certificate she probably would have settled down and become an old maid school teacher like the rest of us. There were very few young men who had any desire for culture and education. Their one desire was to get on, and educated women were left to become old maid school teachers."

Not being able to take charge of a district school, Mary

was fortunate in being engaged to teach a small group of children at Mountain View, eighteen miles southwest of Bakersfield.

During the following two years Mary lived with the family of D. M. Pyle, who was superintendent and cheese maker of the Mountain View Dairy. It was a stimulating experience for Mary. The house was surrounded by over an acre of beautiful lawn, water for which was supplied by an artesian well which sent a small stream continually meandering through it. It was a restful spot compared with the homestead and Rose Station with their scant, always thirsty vegetation.

In much the same way that the land surrounding the Pyle home responded to the constant supply of water, Mary was encouraged to bloom by the admiration of the Pyle family. Mr. and Mrs. Pyle had been teachers in the California schools. They were anxious to give their children educational opportunities and felt themselves fortunate in securing a modest appearing young woman with Mary's intellectual attainments and evident aptitude for teaching.

The younger members of the Pyle family welcomed Mary enthusiastically. Elmo, the son, recalls her as a modest, rather timid young woman whose love of nature and eager search for learning challenged his sincere and lasting admiration, even though, "Being a boy," as his sister, Dera, expresses it, "he was interested in anything where there was gun-play in those wild and woolly days."

Dera Pyle, six years younger than her brother, adored Mary, her first school teacher and her first music teacher. The school house was four miles away from the Pyle home and they rode there together in a two-wheeled cart

hitched to "Old Bob." On cold, frosty mornings Mrs. Pyle heated grain and put it in the bottom of the cart to keep their feet warm. She bundled them up in coats and blankets and veils to protect them from the frost in the air. For the first time in her life Mary found herself tucked in and cared for. In the evening the family gathered around a big table on which stood a kerosene lamp. They discussed the problems of the settlers. Mr. Pyle was a Bible student but not a Methodist. Mary, somewhat bound by the formal religious restrictions imposed upon her by the traditional family Methodism and still uncertain of her religious experience argued with Mr. Pyle and Elmo.

Elmo says, "It was amusing at times. Mary was uncertain—troubled. I am sure she argued against us because she wanted to be convinced that we were right in our understanding of God in nature."

There was no Sunday School or church so Mary taught the children their first Bible lessons and told them Bible stories. She told Dera and the little sister, Elva, marvelous fairy stories. One time Dera was ill for three months. She says, "I can well remember the one bright spot in my long day was the chapter each night in our fairy story of a beautiful princess. As soon as Mary reached home from school, washed up and combed her beautiful hair, she would come to my bed and say, 'Now where were we?' and her mind would soar."

Mary's clothes were somber, unattractive black or brown. Her face was homely, but the children forgot that in admiration for her hair. It was long and thick and shining gold and brown and she wore it in a coil around her head. They thought her hands were beautiful. The long, tapering fingers appeared to great advan-

tage on the keyboard when she played hymns for them to sing in Sunday School or showed them how to hold their hands on the keyboard of the organ at home.

Even the Chinese servants about the place voiced their admiration for Mary. Ah Sing, the wash Chinaman used to say, "Him heap young—teachee school—he talkee me belly nice—heap smart!"

Mary, accustomed to the critical, sometimes apparently hostile attitude of her family, blossomed in this atmosphere of admiration and affection. She reacted in a way that became characteristic of her. All her life those who approached Mary Austin with a friendly attitude found her friendly, those who came in a critical frame of mind expecting to find her "high hat" and egotistical found what they expected.

Although Mary told fascinating stories she impressed Dera as a very serious-minded person. She seldom laughed. So seldom that Dera recalls vividly one hot afternoon when they took their rocking-chairs out on the lawn and sat and read, "I was only ten," Dera says, "but oh, the books she put in my hands!" This afternoon they left the chairs where they had been sitting. They had reached the porch when someone yelled, "Look out!" and a wild, mad cow from the dairy rampaged across the lawn.

As she reached the rocking-chairs she came down with her old Arizona horns and threw them into the air and across the lawn. Mary laughed and laughed, "Dera, can't you see us going up in those chairs if we had been there?"

But this was an exceptional occasion. Dera says, "I never saw Mary really jovial or the least 'loosened up,' as you might say, until after she had written *The Land*

of *Little Rain*. She visited us about that time, and such a good visit as we had. I was older and could appreciate her then, too. When Mary was with us at the dairy she was, of course, always reading and since I was somewhat of a bookworm she liked to have me reading when she did." Dera loved to walk with Mary, gathering the wild flowers that grew in profusion and learning their botanical names and how to classify them.

They studied the tracks of animals and found the nesting places of birds. As a memento of those days Dera Pyle, now Mrs. H. C. Wallace, treasures an old school book in the back of which Mary wrote the *Verse of the Sandhill Crane* which years later appeared among the poems published under the title, *The Children Sing in the Far West*.*

*Whenever the days are cool and clear
The sandhill crane goes walking,
Across the fields by the flashing weir
Slowly, solemnly stalking.
The little frogs in their tules hear
And jump for their lives when he comes near,
The fishes scuttle away in fear
When the sandhill crane goes walking.
The field mice know when he comes their way,
Slowly, solemnly stalking,
There is danger and death in the least delay,
When the sandhill crane goes walking.
The chipmunks hide in their holes away,
The gophers stop in the midst of their play,
And, "hush O, Hush" the field mice say
When the sandhill crane goes walking.*

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CHAPTER XI

MARY COULD NOT HAVE BEEN PLACED IN a better seat to witness the drama that was being enacted in the valley of the San Joaquin and garner that information about the West that was to make her writing ring true as a freshly minted coin.

The ranchers of Mountain View came from New England, from the Middlewest, from the South during the period after the Civil War. Many of them were native sons and daughters, children of the gold rush. They received Mary kindly, not scornful of her book learning, but coveting it for their children.

She had gone far enough along the long trail to ultimate success in her writing to know what she wanted. She studied the life of these people, molded as it was to the western scene. She saw them tackling the problem of reclaiming the desert by irrigation, fighting the alkali, asserting their rights against the larger landholders, while violent antagonisms grew over land boundaries and water rights that gave the only assurance of the land's productivity.

She studied the men who had acquired large holdings in the valley and found how they had gone about satisfying their acquisitive instincts.

Leader of them all in native sagacity and endurance was Henry Miller. Mary heard the stories of how he had herded pigs and sheep as a lad in Brackenheim, a town in the northern part of Germany. Cattle were few and the strips of land small, but he dreamed of great fields

stocked with cattle bearing his brand. Working toward the realization of his dream he finally arrived in San Francisco, California. He was a pallid, fever-stricken young man, friendless, with six dollars in his pocket and a resolution not to spend any of his capital until he had found a job. He rode the range with Mexican vaqueros, worked as a butcher boy, acquired a butcher shop in San Francisco, slaughtered calves and packed them on his back to Clark's Pond and North Beach and sold them to retail butchers. Into his shop came cattle marked with the HH brand, the brand that he had visioned when herding sheep and pigs in Brackenheim.

The cattle bearing this brand came from the San Joaquin Valley. Not many years later Henry Miller bought one hundred and thirty-five acres of land in the San Joaquin Valley at \$1.50 an acre, seventy-five hundred head of cattle at \$5 a head, and the HH brand.

This was only the beginning. The time came when he and his partner, Lux, owned land in nineteen counties in California and rented hundreds of thousands of acres on which to run their stock from the railroads. The legend ran that they could drive their cattle to the San Francisco market from any one of their far flung holdings and camp every night on their own ground. When the HH brand marked over a million head of cattle that grazed over a million acres of land, Henry Miller bought out Lux and became the King of Cattle Kings.

Mary saw him at the home ranch, Sajon de Santa Rita, a man with unmistakably German features, a beard such as had been popularized by Lincoln, and the heavy-set appearance of General Grant. With the exception of a diamond stud in his shirt front, he dressed always in a plain business suit and wore boots with the high heels

that vaqueros wear to keep the foot from slipping too far into the stirrup.

People criticized his attention to details and considered him penurious. But on talking to his vaqueros and the managers of his ranches Mary found that they spoke of him with the greatest respect. They held that no man in California had a surer knowledge of cattle than Henry Miller. They told how he could ride through a bunch of steers and estimate their value as beef within a few dollars.

Overseers pored over their books and took special note of the condition of the cattle in their charge when they knew that Henry Miller was due to visit the herd. They expected a barrage of questions:

"How many cattle in the arroyo?" And if he was not satisfied with the estimate, "What did you do with the rest?"

"Is that young heifer with the rough hair picking up?"

"Did you fix that gate on the lower forty?"

"Did you stretch the wire on the highway fence?"

He spoke always with a marked German accent and his nearest and only approach to profanity was, "Chesus!"

Having all his life garnered every moment of time and often going for a week without taking off his clothes when he was making a tour of his ranches, he excused no one for loafing on the job. But his generosity was unflinching when an employee fell ill or his family was suffering for want of medical attention. Old friends and neighbors learned to depend upon him in an emergency.

He instructed his overseers that anyone passing a ranch house should be given food if he were hungry. Hobos traveling that way came to know the Miller properties

as the "dirty plate route," since they ate at second table and were instructed to avoid making any trouble for the employees.

But the settlers found that this hard, shrewd business man encroached on what they considered their rights. In the early days the Spanish colonists had been able to procure water for their holdings by showing their intention of using it to good purpose on their land. They were able to divert water from a natural channel at considerable distance from their holdings and, having provided for its diligent use, retain this right against future owners of land along this channel, or along their diverting canal.

But shortly before California was admitted to the Union, the legislature established the rule of Riparian Right, an act which deprived the settlers of their right to water except as it became theirs through purchase of land contiguous to it.

So it came about that much land, which through irrigation could be made to produce abundantly, was unfit for settlement. Settlers who had acquired land in nooks and corners along the irregular outlines of the Miller properties found that Henry Miller controlled all the water, and the only recourse they had was to purchase it from him at his own price and divert it when and where he pleased to allow them.

Much of this Mary learned from Mr. Pyle as they sat around the table in the evening and discussed the activities of the Grange. She knew about the Grange. She remembered how Father had been a Grange organizer in the days when the farmers had first conceived the idea of combining to protect their interests against organized capital. The mention of the word brought vivid memories

of the old melodeon in the farm house on Plum Street, and the tunes of the Grange songs that she had learned to play on it.

Mr. Pyle explained how even the question of Sunday irrigating had worked to the advantage of Henry Miller. If a farmer had arranged for a certain number of hours of water running over his gate, he could not discontinue its use on Sunday without irrigating Henry Miller's holdings. Sunday or not, the *zanjero* portioned out the water and it behooved the farmer to be at his intake to receive it.

Struggle as they might and organize as they did, the settlers found it difficult, not to keep their heads above water, but to keep water flowing over their land so that they might make a living from it.

Just before Mary came to Mountain View new actors began to appear on the stage set for the San Joaquin drama. They were moneyed men with a scheme for investing their capital in land and building ditches and water gates, equipping them with all the latest methods for irrigation and renting them out to the settlers. Among them came Haggin and Tevis, two men financially and mentally equipped to take up the fight against Henry Miller. They acquired a chain of ranches, the Pyle home at Mountain View being one of them.

Lloyd Tevis and James Ben Ali Haggin came from Kentucky. They had both studied law. They met in San Francisco and having been friends in the blue-grass country they decided to join forces. It took little capital to establish a fortune when money was easily loaned at ten-per-cent a month. At that rate the young partners soon had money enough to invest in broader enterprises.

It was inevitable that James Ben Ali Haggin, born in
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Kentucky of Arabian stock, should be interested in horses and the breeding of fine stock. The San Joaquin Valley offered not only investment opportunities but also an ideal location for raising and training horses.

So it came about that the land company of Haggin and Tevis became a powerful factor in the water situation. The antagonism between the various factions waxed bitter. Small farmers grew desperate. They asserted their water rights with shotguns. Men employed by the large land holders that had moved into the San Joaquin were sent out, armed with shotguns, to cut dykes and tear out water gates.

The women in the homes of company employees and small farmers put aside domestic gossip and talked of nothing but the water fight. One morning Mary would see the water birds spreading their wings against the sun-warmed dykes, and the following morning their place would be taken by grim figures with their guns across their knees.

Even the children grasped the importance of water in the struggle to reclaim the desert. Mary had been trying to instill some social observances along with her teaching. She had taught them to respond, "Yes, Ma'am—No, Ma'am," to her questions. One day when she was trying to make them familiar with the habitat of certain crops, she asked: "Does cotton grow in this valley?"

"No," was the prompt answer.

"No, what?" she prompted severely.

"No water," replied the pupil, evidently puzzled by her lack of knowledge of the limitations imposed by nature.

The pioneers had obtained their water rights and dug their ditches at great labor and expense. The first water

diverted from the Kern River had been a small ditch, five miles long. Other diversions followed and finally the Stein Canal, twenty miles long, was built. Then with a great plow drawn by sixty head, thirty yoke of oxen, the settlers had combined forces to gouge out a canal twenty-two miles long—a tremendous undertaking!

Through Elmo Pyle Mary heard of the desperate fight they were putting up. One morning he was sent out with the Haggin and Tevis zanjero to control a gate or weir. While they were passing through the tall weeds that grew around the weir they found themselves looking directly into the muzzle of a rifle in the hands of a determined settler. "I am in charge here," he announced, "you had better go about your business and I would advise you not to send the sheriff!"

Haggin and Tevis brought their influence and wealth to bear on the situation, but the water, thus grimly protected, flowed to the settlers for weeks.

There was something in those settlers akin to the grizzly bear of whom Mary wrote:

*If you ever, ever, ever meet a grizzly bear
You must never, never, never ask him where
He is going
Or what he is doing,
For if you ever, ever dare
To stop a grizzly bear,
You will never meet another grizzly bear!*

A great legal battle that involved the whole state of California ensued. The traditional English usage of Riparian Rights was defended by the most talented men of the profession, as against the Law of Appropriation, which, from Spanish settlement had been recognized as

most necessary for the common good. The Riparian Right became nominally the law of the state. Even the Governor of California declared the decision was a calamity.

It gave Henry Miller all the rights he claimed. But he was too shrewd a man to press his advantage. Although upheld by the state's decision, he showed himself willing to compromise and the rights of the various parties to the controversy were finally recognized and adjusted.

Mary had learned that America was prone to uphold traditional legal formulas even though their utility was questionable. They followed in the footsteps of their English cousins who never broke a law but when one got in their way knew more ways than they were willing to acknowledge for evading it.

As the agricultural interests of the country increased the orchards and vineyards began to bear. With this the wave of peripatetic labor which began around Riverside in December during the orange harvest, spread north into the higher valleys for the apricot, grape and prune picking, and traveled on to the hop harvest in the Sacramento Section.

Mary was intrigued by these gipsy-like caravans of wage-earners, mostly Mexicans, who brought their families along. Even the littlest ones, barely able to toddle, had some part in the work. She wrote about them, trying to convey some idea of the colorful pageant, with its migrations as subject to season as the flight of birds. When she had finished she sent the story to an eastern editor.

But the credulity of the editor was too severely taxed by the story to publish it, and Mary was made aware of

the fact that until the scenes depicted had been observed and could be verified by a sufficient number of Easterners, no editor would accept material about them for publication. For years she was handicapped by this attitude. When events were happening in the West that were new and fresh to her and she could write of them with keen interest, eastern editors refused to believe their authenticity. By the time they woke up to the fact that something unusual was really happening, it had become an old story to Mary and she had encountered something new that they found just as incredible.

It was during the time that Mary was teaching at Mountain View that the orchards were invaded by San José scale, and the Australian lady bug was imported to destroy the pest.

Little Elva Pyle asked if the Australian lady bug was related to the "Ladybug, ladybug, fly away home."

Recalling the time when she had entertained the neighbor children on Plum Street by inventing new rhymes to nursery jingles, Mary improvised:

*Ladybug, Ladybug, fly away home,
The scale bug is down in the orchard alone,
He is eating his way to the topmost limb,
Ladybug, Ladybug, go and eat him!*

The children loved this graphic picture of what was happening. They had the advantage of the eastern editors. They were living the experiences that seemed so far-fetched to those not in contact with them. Mary had a way of catching up the dramatic incident of the moment and crystallizing it in rhyme. Youngsters remembered the little poems. It happened years afterward when she would be lecturing in California, some woman,

her hair grown gray at the temples, would come and grasp Mary's hand and begin, "Ladybug, Ladybug—"

Another source of unfailing interest at Mountain View was the folk-tales that spring up in a community so isolated from the outside world that outstanding men and unusual events in their midst assume proportions that could not exist in other places. Myths grow about such men as Henry Miller, myths that related, not what Henry Miller thought and felt, but what the person telling the story would have thought and felt had he been in Henry Miller's shoes. In this way Mary became familiar with one of the most skillful methods of the novelist in depicting character, the folk method of character drawing by myths.

There were stories of famous bandits, Joaquin Murietta, Armigo, Salomon Pico, Vasquez, Manuel Garcia. Mary remembered hearing General Beale say, "This country is quiet now, but when I first came into it it contained some rough people. The head of the famous bandit, Joaquin Murietta, and the hand of his lieutenant, Three-Finger Jack, were brought into my camp but a few hours after those scoundrels were shot."

The heroic deeds of early explorers were recounted; Kit Carson and Frémont leading the list. There were bear stories, horse stories, sheep-herders' tales, many of them flavored with Basque, Mexican and old French lore.

After Haggin and Tevis had acquired their holdings in the San Joaquin Valley, the eyes of sportsmen were turned in that direction and the country around Mountain View became a popular training ground for hunting dogs. This section was selected because quail were plentiful and after the first frosts the cover, or leaves of the undergrowth, was sufficiently reduced to give well-trained

dogs of all breeds an opportunity to exhibit their field-worthiness to point or set the game and not flush beyond gun range.

Field events, sponsored by various hunting clubs of San Francisco, were held in January. The dogs were brought down early in October by their trainers, one of whom had chosen the Pyle ranch for his kennels. Mr. Pyle had dogs in training and participated in the field meets, and Mary had access to the gun-room and the kennels.

Field events became the outstanding social function of the season. The owners of the dogs came down from San Francisco, the élite of Bakersfield turned out in their fine carriages, or on spirited saddle-horses. In the evening there was an elaborate banquet and ball at the Southern Hotel.

The test of the dogs was a severe one. It consisted of finding the quail and flushing them. After the first flush and flight of the covey, the birds would scatter and take cover, singly or in pairs, over several acres of low sagebrush. Then it was the business of the dogs to precede their masters by twenty or thirty yards, and, by scent, come to a point or set indicating the presence of game. Upon command they would slowly approach the spot until the bird or birds were flushed.

A bird overrun by the dog and flushed by one of the judges counted seriously against the contestant. Retrieving of dead or crippled birds received credit but no good dog should flush a bird without coming to a stand, even in the path of the cripple. Credits were allowed for endurance and for ability to follow a trail or catch a scent over very dry ground. Dry ground tended to make the work of the dogs more difficult and greatly increased

the chance of demerit through over-running or missing the trail of a wounded bird.

During the training season Mary saw the pedigree pointers and setters go out from their kennels. These were crisp October mornings when the first frosts had touched the cover and the quail, with a whirring of strong wings, rose in a cloud for unbelievably rapid flight.

She saw the pointers, their muscles flowing smoothly under their supple skins, their heads raised, their sensitive nostrils pointing the scent. She saw the silken-haired setters, graceful, eager, keen, their long ears laid back by the wind, their padded feet scarcely touching the ground as they ran.

After the field events she saw them return, weary but proud if they had gained the approbation of the judges by following the scent and retrieving properly, drooping with fatigue if they had lost the scent or failed to find a wounded bird that fell and ran into cover so dense that they could not follow.

When the tales of the field were recounted in the gunroom, Mary saw the dogs following the stories of their successes or failures; saw them, proud, embarrassed, complimented, fully aware by sight and sound that the conversation depicted their exploits in the meet.

This reaction was something beyond their response to their ordinary training vocabulary, which called forth a whine or a friendly wagging of the tail. It showed that they recalled the occasion distinctly. A dog who had failed would nuzzle his cold nose in his master's palm for forgiveness. One who had reason to be proud of his record would place his paws on his master's knees and look up into his eyes for approbation.

Mary, studying these reactions, realized that there was

a deeper communication between creature and creature than she had known existed. This responsiveness of the highly bred hunting dogs was akin to the remarkable understanding of the sheepdogs at El Tejon. She felt that she had made an important discovery, something to be followed up when she returned to El Tejon.

Although Mary was interested in and often absorbed by the happenings and life around her, there were intervals when she craved companionship and affection. She was never included in the gay parties at the Southern Hotel. During the time spent at Mountain View she saw little of her family. She knew that they had made their final proofs on the homesteads and were trying to get into something around Bakersfield. Jim was determined to be a farmer and it was evident that Mother's small capital would be invested to that end, making the venture a partnership affair.

Mary opposed the idea. She felt that Jim would be married to the situation. "It would be the same thing as his marrying a widow with two children," she argued. She realized that was the wrong thing to have said. That was the way Mother wanted it to be. She wished to be settled in the traditional pattern of life, the family bound together in one place with Jim as the head.

CHAPTER XII

HAD CIRCUMSTANCES BEEN DIFFERENT, Mary might not have responded as she did to the wooing of Wallace Austin, who was a neighbor of the Pyles. They spoke of him as Professor Austin and considered him a very absent-minded but extremely intellectual man. Mary was pleased and flattered by the evident interest in her shown by Professor Austin. She did not realize that basking in the admiration of the Pyles, so different from the critical attitude of her own family, she had become a more attractive person.

Mr. Austin, a rather tall, slender, quiet young man appealed to Mary because he bore the mark of a gentleman and a scholar. Born and reared on a plantation in the Hawaiian Islands, he had acquired a leisurely manner which, by contrast to the uncouth young men of the valley, impressed Mary agreeably.

The courtship took place in the Pyle home. The family teased Mary good-humoredly. They told how Mr. Austin, when he was going home one day, although there was a bridge and a weir over the ditch he had to cross, walked into the water up to his knees before he realized where he was. But in spite of their friendly raillery the courtship progressed.

Considering all the rebuffs she had received when she tried to make an intellectual rather than a physical approach, it is not difficult to believe that Mary was gratified to find a man who took her efforts at self-expression seriously. There may have been an added impulse in the

memory of Mother crying under the chinaberry tree; Mother, to whom she was always trying to justify herself for having lived when baby Jennie died. There may have been balm for her wounded pride in the satisfaction of showing the Bakersfield young people that she could attract a man of superior attainments. Perhaps Mr. Austin's prowess, demonstrated on the day when they visited the Fox Tail Rangers who were in summer camp, led her to the conviction that he was a man of whom she could be proud physically as well as mentally.

They appeared together in the camp. Early one morning Mr. Austin went out hunting with the men. When they returned he had a young buck slung over his shoulder, and everyone echoed the excitement of the Chinese cook who exclaimed, "You little man, heap kill a deer!"

Human motives being the strange things that they are, one wonders how large a part this episode played in Mary Austin's marriage.

"I think Mary Hunter was in love with Mr. Austin in her own modest way," says Dera Pyle. "She admired his intellect and the gentleman he was. We all did. My mother thought it was all right. Mr. Austin was persistent and as ardent as an absent-minded professor could be. As I think of Mary at that time, she was just a cocoon."

When she went home to prepare for her wedding the thing that Mary had anticipated had happened. Mother and Jim and George had moved to a ranch on the Stein Canal, about three miles from Bakersfield. Knowing her objections to the move they had not consulted her about it. Now that "she was going out of the family," as Mother expressed it, they felt no obligation to discuss their plans with her.

There was no reference to her share in the family in-

heritance, which Jim and Mother had used to establish themselves on the Stein Canal. She was given to understand that all she could expect from the family was a "present" which she found under her plate at Christmas time, marked "From Mother."

Mary might have rebelled had she not known that the few acres of grapes which were the only available asset, and which Jim and Mother had counted on to meet the interest on the mortgage, had turned out to be wine grapes instead of raisin grapes as they had supposed them to be.

Even though there was no winery in Bakersfield, there were many people who made a few barrels of wine for household use, and the grapes could have been marketed for that purpose. But Mrs. Hunter, still an ardent disciple of Frances Willard, could not endure the idea of selling the crop or raising wine grapes. The vines must come out, root and branch. Not even Mary suggested doing anything else. She knew that Mother never faltered when there was a principle at stake.

Although Mary's attitude toward moral problems often differed from her mother's, yet it is evident that Mary admired and respected her unswerving loyalty to a principle which she had espoused. This admiration made her loneliness more poignant. It made her long to be closer to her, to share the affection which although lavished on the other children, had always been denied her.

Many of the dramatic situations in Mary Austin's *A Woman of Genius** were so evidently taken from her own experience that in many ways it is a more youthful, more vivid autobiography than *Earth Horizon*. In it she says, "My mother, though she took on for the occasion

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an appropriate solemnity, was frankly relieved to have me so well disposed.... There was no one whose business it was to tell me that I did not love Tommy enough to marry him. Marriage I began to perceive was an engulfing personal experience. Until now I hadn't been able to think of it except as a means of providing pleasant companionship on the way toward that large and shining world for which I felt myself forever and unassailably fit. It began to exhibit now, through vistas that allured, the aspect of a vast, inhuman grin. Somewhere out of this prospect of sympathy and understanding arose upon you the tremendous inundations of life.

"You must imagine for yourself from what you know of nice girls thirty years ago, how inarticulate the whole business was. The most I can do is to have you understand my desperate need to know, to interpose between marriage and maternity never so slight an interval in which to collect myself and leave off shrinking....

"About a week before my wedding we were sitting together at the close of the afternoon—'Mother,' I said, 'I want to know—' It seemed a natural sort of knowledge to which any woman had a right. Almost before the question was out, I saw the expression of offended shock come over my mother's reminiscent softness, the natural animal terror with which the unknown, the unaccustomed assailed her.

"—She stood up, her knitting rigid in her hands—'I will not hear of such things! You are not to speak of them, do you understand! I'll have nothing to do with them!'

" 'I wanted to know,' I said, 'I thought you could tell me—' "

Assailed by doubts and feeling herself an outsider in

the old family circle before she had made a place in the new, Mary wanted to be married as quietly and with as little fuss as possible.

But Mother, determined that the daughter of the Hunters should be married in the conventional manner, dismissed such a proceeding as preposterous. She drove into town and told the young people that Mary was going to be married and she wanted them to get a crowd together and come out.

They thought it would be a great lark. They hired a big stage with four horses and went. There were not enough chairs in the house but it was a beautiful moonlight night and those who could not be accommodated inside sat on the porch rail.

The service was performed by a Methodist minister. There was no ring. No one gave the bride away. Mary wore a plain, unbecoming brown dress. Those who attended the wedding speak of this as an evidence of her lack of interest in clothes. They felt she never bothered to make herself attractive, that she had no taste, that she did not care about clothes.

The questions uppermost at that time in the minds of people who found it necessary to practice economy in the purchasing of materials were, "Will they wear?" "Will they turn and make over?" These considerations were responsible for a bridal outfit that undoubtedly appealed to Mary as little as it did to the wedding guests.

Through the generosity of Albert Bender, a San Franciscan who has befriended more artists and writers than he willingly acknowledges I have had access to letters written to him by Mary Austin after she became an established writer. In one acknowledging a gift she wrote, "I was much touched by the lovely square of gull

gray silk and the smell of sandalwood charged with memories of old San Francisco. Is there a tea room yet in Chinatown overlooking the Stevenson galleon, and will you take me there some day and tell me how you knew that I am one of the people who love rich fabrics for their own sake as other people love pictures and sculptures? Somehow the web and fiber and color appeals to me more than any other form of art.—I am taking the lovely piece of gray brocade to New York and am going to have it made into a special dress to receive newspaper reporters—”

And yet Mary, with her love of beautiful fabrics was married in a plain, brown dress.

Her mother lived up to her reputation for hospitality by providing delicious refreshments. She asked the young people to sing, “Blest be the tie that binds—” “In the evening by the moonlight—”

Wallace Austin’s gift to his bride was a gold pearl-handled pen in a velvet case. Mary went about showing it to the guests. “I would rather have this than a pearl necklace,” she said, “because it means that I am to go on with my writing.”

Of all the reasons for her marriage this was in all probability the compelling one. There were other factors: a certain pride in showing her friends and family that the queer and unpopular Mary Hunter had been chosen by an eligible man, a certain relief at being no longer a member of the family circle whose attitude toward her ambitions and aspirations had invariably been one of disapproval, a hope that she had won the commendation of her mother who was released from the responsibility of finding a proper husband for her.

But outweighing all these considerations was the de-

sire for self-expression through writing. In Wallace Austin she felt she had found a man who was intellectually sympathetic. She could not have told whether she was most in love with her husband or with the freedom and stimulus to go on with her writing which she felt this union assured.

In her autobiography Mary Austin, in discussing George Sterling and the group at Carmel, many of whom claimed to find fresh love experiences essential to inspiration, wrote, "I never needed a love affair to release the subconscious in me."

Yet one cannot but feel pity for a young girl so capable of deep emotional response, who became Mary Austin by way of a rather colorless, absent-minded though persistent courtship and a marriage where only a puny, passionless love sat the feast.

After their marriage the Austins lived near the Pyle ranch. Mary was endeavoring to write. She was working on a textbook that would illustrate some of her revolutionary ideas in regard to the accepted pattern of education. The dishes accumulated and often Dera Pyle came to the rescue. She wiped while Mary washed, meanwhile looking out of the window, dreaming or telling some story that was taking form in her mind.

The economic problem soon loomed large on the horizon of the young married people. Mary was puzzled that their intellectual approach availed them nothing in their struggle with the ever-present problem of making a living. She went into a general store one day in Bakersfield and while talking to the proprietor she said, in all seriousness, "With all that Mr. Austin knows of

Latin and Greek, with all I know of Latin and Greek, we can't make our hens lay any better!"

It soon became evident that the first venture of the Austins, that of grape growing, was doomed to failure. Although it came about through no fault of their own, others around them having encountered the same difficulties, yet Mary, born of farmers and raised in a farming country, had seen enough to be convinced that Wallace Austin had chosen a vocation foreign to his capabilities.

Some of their neighbors decided to hold on and, changing their original plan, turn the land to general farming. Others, their means still holding out and not knowing what else to do, persisted. Too newly wed to insist upon her husband's acceptance of an offer to teach in the district school, Mary found that there was nothing to live on but the income from a few private pupils whom she had agreed to teach. It was then they decided to move to Bakersfield where Wallace Austin could find some occupation to his liking.

It is evident that Mary took leave of the Pyle family with sincere regret. She never forgot them. When she became a successful writer a copy of each new book was sent to Mrs. Pyle. In 1901, Elva, the youngest one of the family, attended art school in San Francisco. Mary was there at the time. She got in touch with Elva and urged her to travel with her and illustrate her books. But Elva was engaged to be married and could not endure the thought of being separated from her family.

In Bakersfield the Austins lived in a small house not far from the woman who had gone before the Board and successfully passed her examination at the time that Mary had applied and failed. It seemed strange to their

neighbors that two college graduates should settle down to keep house in such a place. They all wondered how it would work out. They felt that Mary was a disappointment as a college woman and resented the fact that she seemed inclined to feel herself superior.

They decided that she was odd as Dick's hatband and not as smart as she thought she was. They criticized her housekeeping and her clothes—the things by which women were generally judged. Suffering from this critical attitude Mary put up the defense that was later to cause her to be called arrogant. She withdrew into herself and people said, "She thinks she is better than we are." Ever loyal Elva Pyle says of those days, "The only trouble was that she was so far above the average person in most small towns that instead of appreciating her, they criticized her."

Mary was not so much concerned about the critical attitude of her neighbors as she was about the need of help in her creative work. It seemed strange to her that farmers, educators, business men, bankers should be expected to ask for and receive advice and talk things over to their mutual advantage, while if she even approached anyone on the subject of writing and how best to go about it, knowing as she did so little of the professional procedure, there was not only no one to advise her, but everyone showed a marked tendency to avoid the subject.

When she tried to talk to Mother about it the answer was always, "If you want to write, why don't you just write? Why do you want to talk about it so much?"

When Mrs. Hunter found bits of prose and verse about the house, bits in which Mary had tried to capture some of her own rapture over the sights and sounds

and colors of mountain and desert, she would collect them and throw them in the waste basket, exclaiming, "Oh, Mary, if you would ever finish anything!"

When Mary approached her young husband, confident that she would find at least an interested listener, he very politely but definitely showed his attitude toward her creative work by replying to her questions, "Why talk about it? Why not just enjoy it?"

Even her neighbors appeared miffed if she tried to talk to them about her writing, as though they felt that she was trying to show her superiority.

When, the move to Bakersfield not having improved the financial outlook of the Austin family, it became necessary to make another change, Mary decided that in so doing her own interest in writing should be considered.

It seemed fortunate that San Francisco offered the best opening for Wallace, for that was the place where Mary felt she would be able to meet people who could help her with her problems. The Austins were among the important people in San Francisco. They were of an old missionary family who had acquired a plantation in the Hawaiian Islands. When Kalakaua was on the throne, Frank, the oldest of the Austin brothers, had been sent as special envoy to the Court of St. James's and had acquitted himself with distinction. He was in San Francisco promoting an irrigating scheme and it was agreed that Wallace should meet him there, leaving Mary to find a tenant for the house they were vacating and make what disposition she could of the remnants of their housekeeping.

What might have been a disheartening time for a young matron breaking up her first home was relieved

for Mary by the sense of release from other people's necessities that left her time to write. It was a momentous occasion, one which she was to hold in her memory forever after. Years later, in *Earth Horizon*, she recalled it as: "This opening movement of an activity that was to mean more to me than anything that has ever happened to me. Quietly, as I suppose all growing things begin, in the first instance of detached independence I had ever had, I wrote two short stories."

Mary, even then, had a sure sense of artistic fitness, and the sentimental short stories that were in vogue at that time were anathema to her. She turned to Kipling as her master, feeling that he had blazed the way for the use of the kind of material she had found at hand.

Carefully, feeling her way sentence by sentence, as one might walk a log over the creek, foot by foot, she wrote two sketches. She used the death of a Mexican lad in Tejon Canyon as the material for one and the adventures of a Chinese truck gardener for another.

The fact that the story of the Chinese truck gardener was included in her last published volume, *One Smoke Stories*,* shows that from the beginning Mary had a true instinct for the material best suited to her purpose and the style best suited to her material.

She struck out boldly, bringing Ah Lew Sing to life with a vividness that never left her pen. "Ah Lew Sing was the proprietor of a vegetable garden between the stock yard and the railroad bridge, on the further side of the Summerfield Canal. He was the lankiest, oblique-eyed celestial that ever combined an expression of childlike innocence with the appearance of having fallen into a state of permanent disrepair."

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What better could Mary Hunter Austin have done after a course in the best modern schools of journalism?

Equipped with a perilously frail physique, Mary moved on to San Francisco, not knowing that she was in reality setting out for Don José's country of the long trail.

The most precious possession that she took with her from the valley of the San Joaquin was the information that she had jotted down in voluminous notes, with no definite idea of future use or arrangement, but knowing that they were invaluable, since she was convinced that she would write of the western scene.

There were notes on Indians, sheep and their herders, dogs, vaqueros and cattle kings, water rights and water fights, notes on how the spring came on the sweet south wind over the desert and how fall marched down the canyons of the Sierras from their snow-capped mountains. There were observations of the ways of wild creatures, scents and sounds, taste and touch of the sage and chamoise, wild grapes and piñon nuts, the soft sound of figs dropping and the pattering of olives when shaken loose by the wind. There were folk stories and myths that had grown up about people and animals, exact adjectives to describe sounds and sensations and colors, adjectives arrived at after painstaking observation and prolonged meditation. A jumble of thoughts, impressions, ideas, caught and crystallized in words that Mary felt were right.

CHAPTER XIII

WALLACE AND MARY AUSTIN ARRIVED IN San Francisco in the spring of 1892. At the first opportunity Mary got in touch with Ina Coolbrith who was at that time the only woman poet on the coast whose contributions were accepted by eastern magazines. Ina Coolbrith had been associated with Bret Harte on the *Overland Monthly*, and their names with that of Charles Warren Stoddard were claimed by California to equal in distinction that of any eastern literary figures.

Ina Coolbrith was employed in the Oakland Free Library, where Mary went to see her. Ina had crossed the plains when a child and her eyes still held the look of being accustomed to far horizons. She was tall and well proportioned with a queenly dignity and a slow smile which lighted her pleasing face but never broke into a laugh. Ina Coolbrith as a poet is well loved by Californians but Ina Coolbrith as a generous, great-hearted woman is adored by the generation of writers to whom she never failed to give helpful advice and sympathetic encouragement. Irving Stone in his recent biography of Jack London, *Sailor on Horseback*, tells of that famous author's first encounter with Ina Coolbrith in the Oakland Free Library.

He was a ragged, dirty, hungry looking lad but the light in his eyes when he saw the tier on tier of books that would be his to read for the asking, won her heart. She talked with him. She found books which he liked best—travel—adventure—sea-stories. He read them

through as quickly as he could, partly for their absorbing interest that released him from the sordidness of life, and partly to finish them so that he might go back to the library and see Ina Coolbrith.

I met Ina Coolbrith once. She was the guest of honor at a California Writer's Club dinner, one of the last functions she attended. She wore a black lace mantilla thrown over her snowy hair. She was beautiful with a dignity and repose that bespoke a generous, unselfish attitude toward life. She had mellowed like a fruit, developing sweetness as the years passed. As she pleasantly greeted the writers, eager to show their affection and appreciation, I felt how proud anyone would be to call her Mother and how truly she had mothered so many people spiritually.

Mary found her sympathetic and generous with practical advice regarding the preparation of manuscripts. She followed her advice and submitted both her stories to the *Overland Monthly*. They were accepted but she was informed that the magazine did not pay until publication, and then only a small sum. As it turned out, she received a meager amount for the first story and nothing for the second.

The outstanding events during the two months that Mary and her husband spent in San Francisco were the meeting with Ina Coolbrith, the placing of the manuscripts, a visit to the Chinese Theater, and the opportunity of seeing the play, *Pygmalion and Galatea*.

Meanwhile she wrote a children's poem which was accepted by the *Youth's Companion*.

All of these happenings were pushed into the background of her memory of that visit by the discovery that she was to have a child and the attendant mental

reaction and physical discomfort that accompanied it.

Had she not been thus absorbed, she might have acquired a more definite knowledge of the irrigation project which apparently promised such abundant returns, but which was incompletely financed and doomed to failure in the hands of men as inexperienced in the ways of reclamation as Frank and Wallace Austin were.

But Frank was so thoroughly convinced of its success that he sent Wallace to be the one in charge of the project. Mary soon followed him to that country which was afterwards to be made known, through her writings, as the Land of Little Rain.

There were two routes by which travelers from San Francisco reached Owen's River Valley at that time: one by train to Mojave, changing there to the stage running north; the other, which was known as "going round the horn," by train to Reno, Nevada, south on the Virginia and Truckee to Mound House, transferring there to the narrow-gauge Carson and Colorado which stopped all night at Sodaville, Nevada, and continued the next day to emerge again in California.

It meandered down through the Owen's River Valley, following the course of the wide, flat Owen's River and scorning the towns that had sprung up across the river at the outlets of streams that found their source in the eternal snows crowning the summits of the Sierras.

The stations where passengers left the train to stage five or more miles to the towns through hub-deep sand or snow-soaked mud, were sorry affairs, painted a dull red and planted with a few straggling trees that only enhanced the desolate outlook.

There was Laws, the station for Bishop, five miles away, Alvord, the station for Big Pine, Independence Station where passengers took the stage for Independence, the County Seat of Inyo County, and Lone Pine, the last station before the railroad petered out into the desert at Keeler. It was here that Owen's River emptied into a body of water with no outlet, known as Owen's Lake.

Mary's destination was Lone Pine where her husband was in charge of the construction of the irrigating canal which was to be taken out of Owen's River in that vicinity, opening up large tracts of land for settlement and promising immense returns to the original investors.

Mary knew nothing and had no way to judge of the feasibility of the project. No young wife of the period was supposed to understand business affairs or to annoy her husband with questions concerning them.

Today with the great projects for irrigation successfully completed and Boulder Dam a monument to engineering skill, it is difficult to picture the puny, pioneer efforts to reclaim the desert and to realize the hopes that vanished in disillusionment.

The lure of gold with its fickle promise was no more compelling or elusive than that of water, confined, controlled, to bring life to desert land and settlers to the acres thus rejuvenated.

On account of the slight grade of the valley floor through which the water flowed sluggishly, it was necessary to divert the water many miles above its prospective use. Since settlers were few and canal miles many, it was an almost hopeless task to irrigate the thirsty acres on which were fixed their only hope of living and supporting a family.

It was a hazardous undertaking, physically and financially, to build canals through creeping, devouring sand and century-old rocks, with only shovels and scrapers, pulled or driven by mule power or man power. Winter storms cut arroyos through sections of ditches that had taken months to build. Spring found them choked with debris which took almost as much time and energy to remove as it had to build the ditch in the beginning.

The Austin brothers soon realized that they were in no better situation than the company who had started the project but dropped it for want of funds. They were in the same category with the tenderfoot who was taken out in the brush at night and given a sack to hold while the hunters went out to drive the game into the sack!

Unconscious of the disaster that was already imminent, Mary was lulled into an attitude of peaceful security by the belief that their living was assured, and happy in the anticipation that she so vividly pictures in *The Walking Woman*, that short story in *Lost Borders*,*

"To work together—to love together—there you have two of the things; the other you know.

"‘The mouth at the breast,’ said I.”

"‘The lips and the hands,’ said the Walking Woman, ‘The little pushing hands and the small cry.’”

Mary’s experience in San Francisco had given her assurance. She knew that Ina Coolbrith was a minor poet and that the *Overland Monthly* was relatively an unimportant publication. Her aim must be above and beyond their accomplishments. Meanwhile her place was where her husband’s work lay, and pencil and paper could be had there as easily as any place else.

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So she sat contentedly under the cottonwoods in front of the Lone Pine Hotel, in reality but a short distance as the crow flies from the San Joaquin Valley, but miles removed in traveling distance. There was a strange, wild beauty about the lift of the Sierras as they rose directly from the floor of the valley to jagged peaks so high that Mount Whitney, at whose base Lone Pine nestled, was not outstanding in that lofty company.

There was a mellowed softness in the older peaks and canyons of the Inyo range to the east, with their golden lights that grew into scarves of orange and rose and mauve as the evening shadows fell.

It was easy to understand why the Indians had given the name Inyo to the range. It meant The Abiding Place of the Great Spirit.

As Mary strolled about the town that she was afterwards to christen the Little Town of the Grapevines, she heard the quail calling, "Cuicado," and saw the flock scurry to cover as the cock sounded a warning note. She made the acquaintance of the soft-spoken, gentle-mannered Mexicans who added a dash of chili to give flavor to their food and celebrated the sixteenth of September with wine and singing and dancing to the sound of strumming guitars.

It was to this town that she later invited her public in her first published book, *The Land of Little Rain*.*

"Come away, you who are impressed with your own importance in the scheme of things, and have got nothing you did not sweat for, come away to the round valleys and full-bosomed hills, the even-breathing days, to the kindness, earthiness, ease of El Pueblo de las Uvas, and to that other town above Las Uvas that

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merits some attention; a town of arches and airy crofts, full of linnets, black-birds, fruit-birds, small, sharp hawks and mocking birds that sing by night. They pour out piercing, unendurably sweet cabbitinas above the fragrance of the bloom and musky fruit."

Mary went about absorbing those sights and scenes, as necessary to her creative writing as food and drink was to that other creative process that was going on in her body.

But she was to carry the memory of that Little Town of the Grapevines for many years before she recalled it on the written page, for she was suddenly and without warning faced with the fact that the irrigation scheme had failed and that she and her husband were left with no available funds.

One day when she returned to the hotel she found her trunk and other belongings out on the sidewalk and the door to their room locked. Informed by the landlady that the bill for their board and lodging was unpaid, she sat down on her trunk and looked anxiously up and down the road, waiting for Wallace and feeling that the woman had taken a mean advantage to oust them when he was not there to adjust matters.

For hours she sat there, surrounded by their few worldly possessions, summoning all her strength against giving way to the situation.

Finally a sympathetic woman whose acquaintance she had made happened to pass that way and, grasping the situation, suggested that there was a boarding house on the edge of town where Mary might be able to obtain lodgings.

It was a long walk but she finally reached the farm-

house where Mrs. Dodge took in boarders, mostly miners who came to recuperate from lead poisoning on a diet of milk, fresh vegetables and fruit.

Still holding to the customs of her native Germany, Mrs. Dodge was having a cup of coffee all by herself. She invited Mary to sit down and have a piece of coffee cake with her.

Beside herself with anxiety, Mary accepted the invitation and listened to Mrs. Dodge's woeful account of how slow her boarders were about paying their bills and how her cook had left and she had been on her feet until they hurt so she could scarcely stand on them.

When she finally paused for breath to go on with her story, Mary told her who she was and that she was looking for a place where she and her husband might have board and room.

It was evident that the predicament in which Mary found herself had been foretold in the gossip of the town. With a kindly heart which often waylaid her rough tongue, Mrs. Dodge braced herself against the sympathy that Mary's condition and evident distress aroused in her.

Her English became even more broken as she protested that she wouldn't be taking any more boarders. Things were bad enough with her already, yet. She ought to be out in the kitchen, making pies this minute, and her feet aching so she couldn't bear it. How in hell she could take any more boarders—! Then the reason for all the argument was revealed; anyway she'd heard the ditch people didn't pay their bills!

But Mary clutched at that word "pies" as a drowning man will grasp a straw. She saw Aunt Hannah Dugger selling ginger-bread when grandfather's drug store

burned down. Could Hannah's granddaughter do less when faced by the present emergency? Famous old recipes buzzed in her head.

"I know how to cook. Let me make the pies for you!" Mary summoned all her dramatic ability to convince Mrs. Dodge of her usefulness in the crisis.

Mrs. Dodge wavered, "You ain't fit to be in a hot kitchen. You look all done out,—and in your condition, too!"

"I'd rather be cooking than sitting and thinking, Mrs. Dodge. . . . Do let me try."

Mary helped the landlady to get to her feet which proved the best argument she could have used. When those aching extremities rebelled against her weight the landlady succumbed.

"Well, you'd better go ahead and do the best you can. You're young an' you've got spunk. I'll say that much for you!" With which announcement Mrs. Dodge settled herself in a comfortable chair.

The pies came out of the oven with succulent juice piercing the pattern that Mary had remembered to make in the flaky crust. Mrs. Dodge tasted the first one. Her kindly heart grew kinder. Her feet responded happily to the added rest and she agreed to give Mary room and board in exchange for her help with the cooking. The boarders came and ate their meal. Her anxiety and humiliation dulled to a stony acceptance of inevitable catastrophe, Mary gave the surface of her mind to the kind of men they were and the human interest they might afford.

It was evening when Mr. Austin came, someone having told him where he could find her. Mary knew he had been without food all day and had no money to

buy it. Urged by the age-old impulse of woman to feed her man when he is hungry, she set out what remained of the supper for him. Mrs. Dodge exploded, "You don't look like you was goin' to be able to earn your board an' his'n." But Mary, the new cook at the Dodges' went quietly ahead and the kind-hearted Mrs. Dodge couldn't turn her out.

When the tragic day finally ended, Mary was dizzy and aching with weariness. She longed to have her husband take her in his arms and comfort her and explain what had happened. But he did not mention it. Mary waited. She felt that he must be humiliated and crushed by failure. They would talk things over later when the hurt was not quite so raw. Days passed. Her husband remained silent. The place in her heart that had ached with apprehension and pity for them both grew numb as resentment against his seeming indifference to the situation continued. She was frightened by the silence that lay between them. She tried to break through it but Wallace would not talk.

For three months she cooked and helped to keep her landlady off her feet. Gradually she became interested in the miners who boarded with the Dodges. They came from Panamint, Darwin, Cerro Gordo, the Coso Springs country, mining towns that had sprung up during the boom times on the Comstock and still held a few men with the ever-recurring hope of striking it rich some day.

There was talk of outcroppings and leads and veins, tales of the days when silver was shipped from the old Cerro Gordo in bars so heavy that they could not be stolen from the freight wagons that hauled them across

the desert to Mojave. There were stories of pay dirt, of hold-ups, of gruesome murders.

Like every mining section, this locality also had its famous "lost mine," the Breyfogel. Arguments waxed hot over its location, miners definitely placing it all along the Panamint range and even in the Alabama Hills, that hog-back, treeless outcrop that pushed across from the base of the Sierras. There was always someone prospecting for the lost Breyfogel.

Mrs. Dodge had knocked around the mining country for years and, in spite of her grumbling over unpaid bills, no miner, hungry or ill, failed to find shelter under her roof.

Mr. Dodge, her husband, was an old-timer whose vocabulary was as rich with cuss words as the quartz of the Breyfogel was reputed to be with gold. He was a poet in his way and the rhythm of his blasphemies combined with the vernacular of the mining camps fascinated Mary. He kept the family finances at a low ebb by grub-staking prospectors who were always on the verge of "striking it rich." Though Mrs. Dodge objected volubly, she never tightened the purse-strings against such ventures.

Lupe and her common law husband, Bill Withrow, the town's one professional gambler, boarded for awhile with the Dodges. He had been raised in the East and educated for the ministry and was the only man in town besides Wallace Austin who wore a boiled shirt.

When he was away practicing his profession in nearby towns, Lupe would dance and sing Spanish songs for Mary. When she was three months old Lupe had been left on the doorstep of a Mexican woman in Lone Pine with some money pinned to her blanket. From

that time on cash arrived at regular intervals and Lupe had enjoyed advantages, private teachers, dancing, lessons on the guitar.

When the intervals between the arrival of the remittances were long she went to public school, and one time she had been forced to return to the campody (Indian camp) of her mother's people. It was evident that Lupe was a half-breed. She was tall, of Shoshone blood, and had the insolent beauty of the half-whites which she flaunted to the despair of youthful admirers who quarreled and knifed each other over her charms until Bill Withrow came along. Every night that he was in town he used to gamble with Mr. Dodge for his wife's board. It was partly through Lupe and partly through the mahalas (Indian women) who used to come to do the heavy scrubbing and the washing for the Dodges, that Mary came to know the Indians, Shoshones who came from across the Inyo range and the Paiutes who were the local tribe. They were called originally Pah-Ute, due to the fact that they had built their campodies along the creeks fed by the snows of the Sierras. The prefix Pah, meaning water, was used to distinguish them from the Utes of the Great Basin.

It was an exciting event when Indian George brought the news that a variety of redivivos which Mary had heard about and never seen was blooming that year over towards Waban. She hunted five days for it in all the spare time she could find, determined not to miss the occasion which was said to recur only once in seven years.

Because she found the Indian wickiups (houses) and some old basket woman of more interest than the houses and minds of the few white women of the town, she

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provoked the same criticism that she had done on El Tejon.

All that time Wallace Austin lived at the Dodges' and waited for something to turn up. He earned a little money, one way and another, but not enough for their support. Eventually Mary found out that he had known what was going to happen on that day when they were put out of the Lone Pine Hotel. Mrs. Dodge told her that it was because he had refused the principalship of the Lone Pine School, and the hotel was not willing to carry them any longer with no prospect that he would be able to pay the bill. It seemed incredible to Mary. She felt sure that gossiping tongues had maliciously embroidered the facts.

Again she tried to break through her husband's silence. She questioned Wallace, "Why didn't you let me know we were going to be turned out of the hotel?"

A silent shrug was his only answer.

But Mary pursued the subject, "Why did you go away and leave me that morning when you knew it was going to happen? Why didn't you stay?"

"How would that have helped?" Wallace questioned as though the matter was of no importance.

Suddenly Mary found herself faced with the problem of her married life. "How would it have helped?" she wondered. Maybe she had managed better without him.

But she was not to be put off so easily. "Why did you refuse the principalship of the school?"

"I hate teaching," Wallace replied with the apparent conviction that his action was entirely justified.

It was evident that it had not occurred to him to measure his dislike of teaching against the need of ease of mind, physical care and necessary funds for Mary's

emergency. He had not considered it seriously, only acted on the impulse of the moment as it pleased him best to do. Any plan for the future had in no way influenced his decision. Mary was reminded of the time when he had walked into the ditch up to his knees when there was a perfectly good bridge and also a weir on which he might cross.

She tried to find excuses for him but he resented any effort she made toward a common understanding of their difficulties or any plan to extricate themselves from them. He never came to her with the problem and when she tried to talk things over with him, she was as conscious of mental desertion as she had been of physical remoteness when she sat on her trunk in front of the Lone Pine Hotel.

More and more she was overcome with the poignant loneliness of a woman pregnant by a man with whom she has come to realize she has no contact intellectually or spiritually.

CHAPTER XIV

AS MARY'S TIME GREW NEAR SHE FELT the need of her mother as she had in the little girl days when she had wanted to lean against her knees. Surely now she would find the sympathy and understanding that had been denied to her then.

Somehow she managed. She took the stage for Mojave. It was an old thoroughbrace that rocked like a hammock in the wind, a motion that was quite unsettling if one was obliged to ride inside where the air was stuffy and usually laden with the odorous breath of whisky drummers or the cheap perfume used by some not overly fastidious female. Mining experts and lungers knocked knees with Chinamen and old-timers who were as free from the convention of bathing as any other desert rat.

On account of her condition and on the Dodges' recommendation, Mary was given a seat with the driver. Outside the air was fresh and clean and Mary's heart went out to the panorama of pine trees, marching up the mountain slopes to be flung back at the snow line. The jagged peaks above were silhouetted against the blue of a cloudless sky.

The driver was a talkative fellow and when he found her an interested listener, he was at great pains to describe the people and the country while the wheels ground through the sand, rim deep. At Owen's Lake, that bitter inland sea into which the Owen's River emptied, the few huddled houses, filmed over with

gray dust that settled from the borax and soda works, seemed only to add to the dreariness of the miles of crusty deposit that had once lain at the bottom of the lake.

It was a grim setting for the tragedy that had left a dark blot on the annals of Owen's River Valley. There was nothing to divert the driver's attention from the telling of the story for the wheel ruts were worn so deep that the wagon held the horses to the road.

Mary heard how the Paiutes, at first inclined to be friendly to the white people, found themselves driven steadily back from the lands of which they were the rightful owners. Their hunting grounds were despoiled by the herds of cattle and bands of sheep. They began to hunt beef and mutton to fill the need that had formerly been filled by deer and rabbit and quail and seeds and roots of wild grasses. And so the Indian War began.

Soldiers were stationed at Fort Independence. The war had been a sorry guerrilla one at best, the Indians betaking themselves to hidden canyons and arroyos, only to break out again and commit some depredation in their search for food. Driven from their hiding places into the valley floor, they made their last stand, north of Lone Pine at the Black Rocks, that spectacular pile of lava where they found the obsidian for their arrowheads. Foot by foot they were forced out, fighting their way south until eventually they were driven into Owen's Lake and its bitter water closed over their heads. Only a remnant of the tribe was left to earn their living by working for the white men.

The stage traveled all night, changing horses at eighteen-mile stations along the way. It was September

and bands of sheep were being brought down from the Sierra pastures to retrace the long trail to their home feeding grounds. All the way the campfires of the herders shone high up in the mountain canyons and along the foothills.

At Coyote Holes, where they changed horses, a teamster had built his campfire by the side of the road. Five great wagons loomed in the moonlight and the mules were still munching the feed that the driver had spread for them. He peered from his blankets to call "Hello" as the stage passed.

Mary was numbed by the cold that grips the desert in the early morning hours, but soon the peaks to the west were touched by a steadily deepening rose and the shadows cast by the eastern range were silhouetted along the desert floor. It had been a long night, jerking into and out of the washes made by cloudbursts and fording whatever streams had gouged their way across the road bed. Stiff with bracing herself against mishap to the precious burden that lay so close to her heart, Mary welcomed the stop at Red Rock Canyon for breakfast.

The coffee was strong and bitter, the cream was condensed milk diluted to a skim-milk thinness, the fried eggs were swimming in grease. But she was refreshed by the stop and the hot drink, and then they were on their way again.

They passed the remains of another camp by the road where the teamster had evidently breakfasted and shortly afterwards they came up with his outfit, crawling at a snail's pace across the desert. There was no place to turn out and they had to follow it for awhile. The four great freight wagons, with the feed wagon in the

rear, swayed rhythmically as the leaders leaned into their collars. The chains clanked, the wagons creaked, the leaders swung wide and the pointers took up the load while the tugs tightened on the wheel horses.

There was a rhythm about it all that Mary was ever afterward to connect with the desert. It was the rhythm that formed the motif of the *Land of Little Rain*.

They passed the Eighteen Mile House and drove on to Mojave, the place of the Year Long Wind, where the long trail begins. It was here that the flocks assembled in the spring, coming in from the San Joaquin Valley by way of Tehachapi, coming up from San Gabriel and San Bernardino, augmented in dry years by herds of limping, starving cattle on their way to pasture in the meadows watered by the never failing Sierra snows.

There was a long wait in Mojave for the train that came up from Los Angeles and went on over the Tehachapi Pass to Bakersfield. That night Mother came to Mary's bedside and kissed her. It was the one voluntary caress that she remembered. The Hunters never kissed except on formal greeting or leave-taking. Weary from her journey and happy in the thought of this unusual endearment, Mary slept like a child.

Mary labored in child-birth for forty-eight hours. There was no recourse to Caesarian Section in those days. Forceps were occasionally applied, but the customary practice was to let nature take her course, a procedure that usually delivered the child successfully, requiring no assistance except from someone to tie the umbilical cord.

Any more active interference in Mary's case was ob-

viated by the doctor's being called away in the midst of things to amputate the leg of a man who had been injured in a well-boring accident. Mary was left to get along as best she could.

It was quite an exciting event in the neighborhood to have a woman in labor for so long a time, but when it was over everyone settled back and decided it was just another exhibition of Mary Hunter's eccentricities. But the memory of those pain-wracked hours when she had labored to bring her baby, Ruth, into the world, lived long after the immediate experience of them had passed.

On the ninth day Mother announced that any woman with any pride in herself must get up. It was an inviolable rule in those days that that period was the limit of lying-in time. Anything more was sheer shiftlessness. Mary got up the ninth day. The tenth day the doctor was called. For weeks she felt wretchedly weak and ill, but driven by that firm line around her mother's mouth, that line that said as plainly as words, "You're only humoring yourself," she got up and around the house and took over the care of her baby.

It was while she was trying to fight her way back to health and strength and the ability to nurse the child that Mary found herself beset with creditors who revealed the fact that her husband owed bills than ran back even to a time before their marriage.

The Hunters were not people who went in debt and the creditors had selected this time, undoubtedly believing that Mary's family would assume the obligation rather than have people know about it.

The humiliating experience at Lone Pine, happening as it did among comparative strangers, was not so hard

to bear as this. Mary realized that debt was a disgrace in the eyes of her family. She comprehended that they were so incensed over the matter that, prejudiced as they were against divorce, they would willingly allow her to remain at home and apply for one.

Weak and sick as she felt, Mary could nevertheless see the restrictions that would surround her in the home that Mother and Jim had established. There would be no encouragement toward a writing career. The first of her accepted stories came out in the *Overland Monthly* while she was in bed. Mrs. Hunter read it aloud to her but was evidently disappointed in it. Mary had looked forward to the triumph of seeing her story in print.

"What do you think of it, Mother?" Mary asked, since her mother did not volunteer any opinion. Her heart was fairly palpitating for some evidence of pride in her meager success.

"I think you could have made more of it," Mrs. Hunter replied shortly.

The subject was not mentioned again. When the money, at the rate of three dollars a page came, she sent it secretly to her husband. Although his attitude was strange, yet she felt that there was nothing two intelligent people could not do together if their minds and efforts were attuned to the task.

Wallace wrote that he had agreed to fill out a term in one of the district schools where the teacher had resigned in order to marry. At least that would provide them food and shelter until something more adequate could be arranged. She made up her mind that she would return to him and they would talk it all out and come to an understanding and begin all over again.

Mary, now twenty-two years old, packed her baby in a market basket, took the train for Mojave and the stage for the little settlement of George's Creek, north of Lone Pine, where her husband was teaching.

She knew what she planned to do. She had been raised in the practice of thrift and economy. She knew from experience in the college town of Carlinville how people of taste and intelligence managed on a small income to live decently and enjoy the good things of life.

But her husband's background was very different from hers. He had been reared on a huge, carelessly managed plantation, in the atmosphere of superiority that surrounds the whites who live among those of darker skins. Still quite young he had been sent to school in "The States," and had lived in boarding houses on an allowance more than sufficient for his needs. He knew nothing of small sacrifices and savings that would eke out an income to meet the demands upon it. He felt it was all rather cheap and beneath the dignity of an educated man.

He criticized Mary for having promised to meet the obligations which he had contracted in Bakersfield by paying on the installment plan. For once he broke the silence and gave her to understand that he was surprised and displeased at the way in which she managed the affair. He thought she would realize, when he had left the adjustment of their debts in her hands, that she was to put him through bankruptcy. Mary was astonished. She hadn't even know that such a procedure was possible. Even if she had known, her family would not have permitted it.

She saw that there could never be coördination in

their attack on the problem of living. Her husband would only be annoyed by the detail and the philosophy she knew were necessary. Whatever financial chestnuts were pulled out of the fire would be by the burning of her own hands.

To a woman of Mary's temperament there is nothing more baffling than inertia. If bodies or thoughts or principles move, even in the wrong direction, there is a chance that by effort, argument or persuasion you may be able to change that direction, but no weapons are effective against silent immobility.

Although the physical security of their marriage was never threatened yet there was a spiritual infidelity that became even more ominous than a physical lapse might have proved. Mary knew that Wallace was faithful but the fact that her husband never looked at another woman did not compensate for the fact that he never looked at anything with her, and did not even think it worth while to let her know where he was looking. She began to realize that, although married, she was lonelier than ever.

The scrimping and saving at George's Creek would have been unendurable to Mary had it not been for the kindly interest of Doctor Woodin, the big, bluff man who had left a successful career as a consulting physician in New York to find healing for an infected lung in the high altitude and dry climate of Inyo County.

The climate worked its magic but the doctor stayed on, held by the need of his patients who ranged all the way from Independence, where he lived and had his offices, to Lone Pine, Keeler, on into the mountains of Cerro Gordo, Coso and Panamint districts, a radius of two hundred miles.

Mary grew accustomed to the sight of his top-buggy, the springs sagging on one side from his weight, passing at all hours of the day and night. She knew that both she and her baby needed medical attention but, having no money to pay for services, she avoided putting a white rag on a stick at the fork of the county road, the sign that her neighbors used when in need of his ministrations.

But Doctor Woodin soon heard of the Austin woman with the sick child. One day he made the excuse of having forgotten bandages when he was on his way to a mine explosion in the Coso Hills.

He stopped by often after that, his broad, jovial bearded face, ruddy with the wind, the pockets of his big overcoat bulging with medicines or books or magazines or olive oil with which to rub the baby.

He taught Mary how to care for herself and the child. He enjoyed visiting with her, matching his observations of the people and country against hers, relieving her tedious hours of loneliness.

The Austins' nearest neighbors were Mrs. Skinner and Old Bill Skinner. Skinner had been with Kit Carson when they served under Frémont. He had known General Beale, and had his quota of adventure before he settled down as a homesteader at George's Creek. He was a born adventurer, always missing the opportunities at hand to fix his gaze on some future good-fortune. He had a peculiar dry humor, the gift of neighborliness, that attaches to such men. Mrs. Skinner was entirely suited to that type of man, patient, helpful, never daunted by failure, avoiding bitterness by always looking forward to better luck for the next venture. She invariably found time to spare from the

large family that she had raised as a settler's wife, to come to Mary's aid with her motherly wisdom and helpful advice.

Even the Indians did not fail her. When she was ill in bed and the only help to be had was from the women of the campody, she found that her baby suddenly began to thrive. Wondering at the change in the child, she discovered that the mahala, who had a round, brown baby of her own, was nursing the little white child along with it.

Doctor Woodin looked the Indian woman over and found that she was healthy. This reassured Mary and she accepted the gift in the spirit in which it was offered.

Through this devotion she came to know more about the Indians. When she was able to get out again she saw the mahalas, when the days were pleasant, digging taboose, gathering young willow for basket-making. She visited their campody up George's Creek and learned what plants they gathered to be used for medicine, how they made snares for quail, how and where they caught trout with their hands during the spring season.

It was while putting this knowledge to the test that Mary had the most harrowing experience of her year at George's Creek. One day a cloudburst emptied itself in a canyon above the Austin shack, and carrying what it found in its way along with it, flowed tumultuously past, a few feet away, draining away to the lower levels and leaving little lost lakes of water in its wake.

Mary took Ruth on one arm and a hoe in her hand and went out to see what she could find. A large and much annoyed trout was thrashing about in one of the newly made pools. Mary tucked Ruth under a sage-

brush and dammed up the pool to keep her prey from slipping over the bank. Intent on what she was doing, she did not notice an eagle hovering above the spot. With a sudden rush of wings he swooped and snatched the fish before her astonished eyes. The natural instinct for food is quicker than thought. She struck at the bird with the hoe. Surprised at the attack, the eagle dropped the fish.

Mary fell on it to keep it from getting away. Again she heard the sudden and terrifying rush of wings. The eagle, cheated of his repast, swooped again, this time to the sleeping child. The instinct to fight for food is a puny one compared to the maternal instinct when roused to protect its young.

Close growing sage protected the child so that Mary was able to reach the spot and, with the strength born of desperation, fight off the bird which left a claw mark on her arm to remind her of the encounter. Setting her teeth against the weakness that threatened to overwhelm her, Mary struggled home with the trout. It was characteristic of her that although she cooked the fish for supper, she did not tell Wallace how she got it. She had had all she could stand that day and she felt if she so much as mentioned what had happened she would break down and sob hysterically.

As spring advanced, clouds of dust appearing down the valley would signal the coming of the bands of sheep on their way from Mojave to the summer pastures. Passing between the Sierras and the Alabama Hills, the herders would make camp at George's Creek, and often pause a few days to graze the flocks on land which they rented from the farmers.

Seeing the dust coming up the valley, Mary gathered

up what green stuff was to be had in the garden, especially young, tender garlic which the herders would eat as a middle-westerner would crunch an apple. In exchange they would give her a piece of fresh mutton.

She had known several of the herders who came that way in the San Joaquin Valley. And since herders are lonely people and glad to talk of flocks and pastures, she was able to learn more of the tales of the long trail.

It was only when Mother wrote, complaining that they had so little news of her, that Mary realized she had so little to write about. Ill health and poverty and the lack of understanding between herself and her husband were not things with which to burden other people, and the things whose color and interest redeemed her life from utter drabness would shock and not interest Mother.

Wallace accepted the teaching position offered him in Lone Pine the following winter. It meant a better house and somewhat better living arrangements. There was a hotel on one side and a saloon where Bill Withrow fleeced the unsuspecting tenderfoot on the other. There was a space for a garden where Mary could raise vegetables, beans and cabbage and chili.

The habit that Mary had of making friends with the Spanish-speaking population was frowned upon by the conservative inhabitants of Lone Pine. They accepted only the Carascos and one or two other families who still had manners along with old silver and drawn work, to show the gentility of their Mexican ancestry. The others were simply not social equals!

But the lack of manners and silver did not prevent Mary from making friends, accepting slips for her

garden, collecting folk-lore and cooking recipes, and adding new words to her Spanish vocabulary. It was Señora Josefa Maria de la Luz Ortiz y Romero who taught Mary how to assemble the ingredients for tamales and enchilladas, season, proportion and mix them as only the old Mexican families knew how to do.

At Julian's supply store, where the capitans, or head shepherds, congregated, she found what went into the mutton-cabbage soup. The salt pork, carrots, onions and herbs that were added to the unpicked bones of the sheep after the shepherds had eaten to satiety of roast and boiled portions, with one cabbage for each four men and the crusty heels of sour dough bread, made a traditional feast that bound the herders together as roast turkey with dressing and cranberry sauce binds the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers.

It was while Wallace was teaching at Lone Pine that he located a homestead near the Alabama Hills. There was a weird beauty about the place. The ancient fire-scarred rocks that covered the hills had been worn through the centuries by wind and storm into fantastic shapes. Where bits of soil had lodged in the crevices, cacti had taken root and their blossoms caught the colors of the sunset and pinned them to the rocks; glowing red and orange, fading to rose and apricot. There were tiny springs where blue lupine grew.

Mary found an old signal smoke station of the Paiutes and made an altar near an old burying ground where the graves were marked with blue beads. She needed that altar to tradition and beauty to offset the stark loneliness and fear of the burden of homesteading.

A trail that led to the camp of an Englishman, a remittance man, ran near the homesteading shack, and

often he would visit the Austins when they were holding down their claim. He brought a friend with him one night when the air seemed charged with electricity. While they were there the storm broke loose, carrying the sand into every crack and crevice of the shack. The trail was wiped out. All night the four sat up together in the shack, drinking tea to warm themselves, wrapping the bedding around them, huddling close to the kerosene lamp while they read aloud from a new book that the friend had just brought out from England,

*"God of our fathers, known of old,
Lord of our far-flung battle line
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine—"*

In the morning they discovered a small flock of sheep that had strayed from the band and been smothered to death, to be buried each under its little hump of sand.

In such strange ways the time went past but when Mary sat down to write she found she had nothing to tell that would seem worthwhile to Mother.

CHAPTER XV

EVERY YEAR MARY WENT HOME, LOOKING hopefully forward each time to closer companionship and understanding. As the baby grew older Mary felt that the child surely must bring this about.

Dera Pyle recalls that Mary wrote her mother, "I am bringing home the homeliest baby you ever saw." Mary arrived and Dera says, "When she came we saw the most beautiful child I have ever seen. Mary did this to surprise her mother. Ruth looked like pictures of cherubs, fair, curly hair, and round pink baby all over."

But even the child, of whom Mrs. Hunter was proud and fond, failed to change the relation of Mary to her family. The few things she had written and published, instead of meeting their approbation, seemed to set her farther apart from them. Her mother never pasted them in her scrap-book as she did with articles and poems which she felt were worth preserving.

Mary had become interested in the effort to solve human problems by resort to such institutions as the Juvenile Court and the Court of Domestic Relations. An article quoting her as favoring such measures came to the attention of her family.

On her next visit Jim took her aside almost as soon as she arrived and told her that although she was at liberty to say what she liked in her own home, since they had no control over her, she would either refrain from even mentioning such outrageous opinions while

she was visiting them or consider that she was no longer welcome there.

Jim was all worked up about it. No doubt the family had discussed it at length. Mrs. Hunter did not mention it and, although Mary was asking herself, "How can Mother turn against me without even trying to find why I hold such opinions?" she felt it would be useless to try to make them understand.

Years afterwards Mary sent Jim a newspaper clipping which told of her having been guest of honor at a dinner given by the New York Women Lawyers. It told of their sanction of the Court of Domestic Relations. By that time Jim had forgotten that he ever opposed it, and was proud to say that Mary had been one of the first to advocate such measures.

But disappointing as those visits home proved, there was always something happening along the Long Trail to interest and divert Mary. She never failed to provide chocolate layer cake, of which the drivers were very fond, and often a basket of fruit to stimulate talk when it ran low during the midnight hours. She was never bored by retold stories and would swap yarns with them so willingly that she was always given the seat on the boot with the driver.

Many adventures came her way. There was the night when the stage, slowed down by the sand in Red Rock Canyon, was halted by a figure that seemed to come mysteriously out of nowhere. The driver's hand went to his hip in anticipation of trouble.

"Ye got anybody on board that can pray out loud?" questioned the figure, "We got a man here's turrible hurt. He'd like to have somebody pray for him."

Mary leaned across the driver's knee, "I could pray," she said.

"You're a lady, ain't ye? The man's pretty bad."

"I got the mail," said the driver, "but I could wait fifteen minutes."

Mary climbed over the wheel into the darkness while the driver still rested his hand on his hip, not to take any chances.

"Here, you, get out and help the lady," he yelled to the sleepy passengers inside the coach. Two men clambered out. Guided by the swinging light of a lantern, they followed the figure to a camp behind a jutting ledge in the canyon wall. There was a low fire, the light of which fell on a wagon and on the ground beside it where a man was propped against a bed roll and covered with a blanket.

"Here's a lady come to pray for you, Bill."

Bill pushed back the blanket revealing a blood-stained bandage around his chest. He was too far gone to speak.

Another man appeared from behind the wagon. He carried one arm awkwardly, as though it had been injured. He muttered something which Mary could not understand. The man who had guided them to the spot replaced Bill's blanket. "Don't keep the lady waiting, Bill!"

She took Bill's faltering, searching hands in her own, "Merciful Father," she began in a low voice.

The men took off their hats.

"Jesus Christ, forgive my sins!"

Very faintly came the response, "Jesus forgive—"

No time to question or blame.

The following day the two men who had been Bill's companions came up to her while the stage was making

a stop at Olancha. They shook her hand firmly. That was all! And Mary was grateful for that.

This incident made a deep impression on Mary. She recalled it dramatically years later in Florence. She told of it in her autobiography. It seemed to bring her closer to those desert men. For an instant she had been privileged to glimpse a tenderness, a yearning for communication with some power, some friendly being beyond their rough, man-made world where an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth sufficed. They were the people of *Lost Borders* of whom she was to write with sympathy and understanding.

One day Mary with Ruth was a passenger on the stage north from Mojave. The driver took sick from something he had eaten. All at once he yelled, "Whoa!" wound the lines around the brake and passed out.

They were about half way to the Eighteen Mile House. The only passenger besides Mary was an English mining expert on his way to Indian Wells. Between them they managed to get the unconscious driver into the seat that Mary had occupied. The mining expert could not drive but he could hold the baby.

Mary strapped herself in the boot, unwound the reins that ran to the four horses, signalled the leaders by jerking the lines. It took strength, born of necessity, to manage four spirited horses, straining on the bit to reach the station where horses were changed and they knew there would be rest and hay and oats waiting for them.

Although they were traveling a comparatively level desert road, yet it was full of ruts, chuck-holes and rocks, washes made by the sudden violent rain-storms and cloudbursts that sweep over the desert.

But Mary had often been allowed to spell the driver and knew how to handle a four-horse team. She drove the stage into the Eighteen Mile House. Her arms were stiff and sore for days but it was worth it for the excitement of being able to do it.

Mary needed these experiences to help her forget the dark cloud of incompatibility that threatened her marriage. Needed them to push into the back of her mind the growing fear that something was amiss with Ruth.

The trip to Bakersfield from which she was returning had enhanced that fear. Alone with her baby, Mary had realized that she was different from what baby George had been, different from any child that she had ever known. There were days when Ruth would cry almost continuously for no apparent reason until Mary would be distracted, trying to comfort her. The inarticulate sounds she made were not like the soft gurgles and coos common to infants.

But she had felt that it was due to the fact that she herself was not strong and that Ruth had not had a good start in life. She had spoken to Doctor Woodin and untiringly followed his instructions for the care of the child, rubbing her body with the oil he brought, providing the proper food as far as her resources allowed.

The child's body responded and she grew into a beautiful, fair, curly-haired little girl. Ruth was so pretty, when Mary took her to Bakersfield, that Mrs. Hunter had been proud to show her to their friends and excused her tardiness in talking by the fact that she had not been with other children.

But Mary, acutely conscious of the differences between Ruth and other children, was more than ever disturbed

by the strange sounds the child made, the restless, uncertain movements of her small hands.

Looking back over the months she realized that Doctor Woodin must have known, but had avoided telling her, hoping that with returning health and strength she would be better able to bear the truth. She recalled how he had dropped here a hint, there a hint, calling attention to some tardy reflex, some lack in development.

When she returned from Bakersfield he confirmed her fears. He comforted her as best he could. When she searched for some blame in herself for the child's condition he assured her that whatever had happened was through no fault of her own.

She tried to talk to Wallace about it but she encountered the same silence that seemed to surround him in the face of any crisis. "Why talk about it?" he would say and so dismiss the matter.

Mary wanted her mother to know but could not bring herself to tell her. Mrs. Hunter wrote that she would like to see more of little Ruth. Some months later an opportunity offered to send the child to her grandmother with some friends who were going to Bakersfield. Surely when she saw Ruth she would feel Mary's need of her; would realize what she was suffering and be able, out of her own experience, to help and advise.

In a few days a letter came from Jim, indignantly saying that she must take the child away. Mary felt that she could not go and face her family. Finally Wallace went, reluctantly. She found later that the child's condition was never mentioned between them.

Instead of offering comfort or sympathy, Mother wrote, "I don't know what you have done, daughter, to have such a judgment upon you!"

At last the rift between mother and daughter was complete. There is no more poignant passage in Mary Austin's autobiography than the brief paragraph, written with a restraint which shows how deeply she was wounded by her mother's response to her need of her. She says, "That nerve ached out at last, but because it was a grief too long borne in secret for surface recovery, no one ever speaks to me about it."

Even the mahala who had nursed Ruth from her own breasts walked all the way from the campody to Lone Pine, when she found the child was not talking as early as she should, to bring meadow lark's tongues which were known to quicken speech.

Mary Austin's relation to her mother closely paralleled that of her famous contemporary, Sarah Bernhardt. In *The Real Sarah Bernhardt** by Basil Woon, we find the following bitter recollection given by the divine Sarah to her biographer:

"Alas! This was not the last time that my mother's chilly behavior towards me threw me into a paroxysm of misery resulting in illness. I never grew callous to her disapproval of me; her cutting criticism had always the power to wound me to the heart. And yet I loved her. More; I adored her. Poor, lonely, friendless child that I was and had ever been, my starved heart cried out to the one human being whose love I had the right to claim, and who responded to my caresses sometimes almost as if I had been a stranger."

Bakersfield people resented Mary Austin's attitude towards her mother in her autobiography, *Earth Horizon*. Mrs. Hunter was such a fine woman! She was an exemplary character, a church worker, active in the W.C.T.U.

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She did so much for humanity. She was the salt of the earth! Such women as Mrs. Hunter are the salt of the earth but the children of the earth need some sugar!

It became increasingly evident to Mary that if she was ever to extricate herself from what were rapidly becoming unbearable conditions, she must go about it by herself. Her husband was kind and easy-going and uncomplaining, but it did not occur to him to consider her lack of physical strength for the life of pioneer house-keeping on a small income, combined with the burden of an ailing and increasingly unmanageable child. Men made their own plans and their wives fitted into them as best they might.

Giving as a reason for her going that she wished to be near medical attention for herself and Ruth, Mary set out from the homestead in the Alabama Hills to settle in Bishop, the largest town in the valley, surrounded by a prosperous farming community. She had been offered an opportunity to teach English, literature and art in the Academy there.

A few months later I opened offices on the Main Street of Bishop and started to practice medicine. Mary Austin was living at the time in a room over the cellar of the old Drake's Hotel. Neighbors told how she would go out and leave her little girl all alone. How the child had never been taught to care for herself and they would go in and change her and feed her and put her to bed.

There were stories of the abject poverty in which she lived: the soiled tablecloth, the broken dishes, the crackers that were apparently her main article of diet. Women told me of how she would come home and find them straightening up the room and caring for the

child, and how she would scarcely notice them. A neighbor roomer in the hotel took food to her and, incensed at her reception, complained to sympathetic listeners, "The darn fool never speaks to me, but I can't see her starve!"

Then I heard that Susanna Hunter had died. Mary had been planning to go home when she received a letter saying that her mother was ill and they had decided she must go to Los Angeles for medical treatment.

At that time Wallace, disturbed by his wife's absence, but still offering no other solution to their difficulties than that he was still expecting to "get into something," had come to Bishop and he and Mary had decided to go on a camping trip. Mary was longing for a closer acquaintance with the gentian meadows of which she had heard so much from the herders.

But a wire came from Jim stating that an operation had been found necessary. It was too late to catch the Mojave stage which ran only three times a week and Mary prepared to take the train around by Reno. Nervously overwrought by anxiety and delay, she went out to sit on the stoop while Wallace put Ruth to bed.

As she sat there in the quiet of the evening the years seemed to slip away and she thought of Mother with the same yearning for her that she had known as a little girl.

Then Mother appeared. She wore a rose in her hair and was dressed all in white, looking young as she had done in the days when Father was alive. She was smiling sweetly as Mary remembered her in those long-ago days. She reassured Mary. She said there was no reason to take the train for everything was all right.

Mary was so accustomed to mystical experiences and

so gifted with clairvoyant understanding that it did not seem strange this vision should come to her. Although many people scoffed at those things because they did not understand them, yet Mary had seen Indian Jim at Owen's Lake communicate with his people at Mono Lake, one hundred miles away, without benefit of wires or other visible means. Primitive people did not question or ask to understand. They just knew that it happened. Mary was comforted and calmed and went to bed and to sleep.

But in the morning she waked crying, with Wallace trying to reassure her by repeating what she had told him of last night's experience. But Mary knew before the telegram came from Jim. Mother had not rallied from the operation.

Wallace was faced by another crisis. He did not know how to comfort her. As usual he looked around for someone to whom he could shift the responsibility. He knew that Mrs. Drake, a vigorous, pioneering woman, had little patience with or sympathy for Mary and what she considered her queer ways. But the eldest daughter, Lilian, attracted at first by the novelty of the paints and easel that Mary had in her room, had watched with delight while Mary sketched and colored the flowers in the back garden. In this way they became friends and it was to this daughter that Wallace turned in the emergency. He asked her to come and sit with Mrs. Austin.

"I can neither control nor console her," he said. "I won't be back for awhile."

Writing of this tragic time, Mary said in *Earth Horizon*, "There is an element of incalculable ravaging in the loss of your mother—" Again we have that feeling of the restraint with which she touched the scars of old

wounds. Grief for the affection we have missed is often greater than for the loss of love which we have enjoyed. Over and over Mary sobbed hysterically, "O, Mother, I needed you so! What will Ruthie do without you?—O, Mother, how could you—how could you do that awful thing to me?"

The neighbors, full of friendly but curious concern, offered their sympathy, but as soon as Mary regained her grip on herself she withdrew.

By this time she had been able to realize some small recompense for her writing. One of her stories sold to the *Black Cat*, a magazine quite popular at the time. A few poems were accepted. Feeling that it was better for both herself and the child, she put Ruth with a family where she knew she would be well provided for, and devoted all her strength and time out of the classroom to her writing. The action was looked upon by the townspeople as unnatural desertion of her child. Greedily they discussed Mary Austin and her shortcomings with all the animus engendered by one who kept her affairs too much to herself.

No more adequate picture of Mary at that time could be drawn than the one she has given in her description of a character in *Lost Borders*.*

"Emma Jeffries had taken everything in life hard. She had met it with the same bright surface competency that she had presented to the squalor of encompassing desertness, to the insuperable commonness of Sim Jeffries, to the affliction of her crippled child; and the intensity of her wordless struggle against it had caught the attention of the townspeople and held it in a shocked, curious awe—and she would never talk about the child

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—in a country where so little happened that even trouble was a godsend if it gave you something to talk about.

“It was reported that she did not even talk to Sim— But there the common resentment got back at her. If she had thought to affect anything with Sim Jeffries against the benumbing spirit of the place, the evasive hopefulness, the large sense of leisure that ungirt the loins, if she still hoped somehow to get him away to some place for which, by her dress, by her manner, she seemed forever and unassailably fit, it was foregone that nothing would come of it.”

CHAPTER XVI

IN MY INTRODUCTION I TOLD OF MY FIRST encounter with Mary Austin and the impression she made on me at that time. Ruth soon recovered from the acute illness which I had been called upon to treat. But that illness served as an introduction to a friendship which lasted through the years.

The evenings Mary and I spent together in my office in Bishop while she paced the floor and recited the stories that were taking form in her mind, are among my most treasured memories. Transformed by her words, Inyo County and Owen's River Valley were no longer commonplace to me but a part of that fascinating country which she later described in *The Flock*.*

"That desert fenced portion between Mojave and Sherwin Hill, where lies a big, wild country, full of laughing water with pines marching up alongside them, circling the grassy colored lakes, full of noble windy slopes and high, grassy valleys barred by the straight shadows of new mountains. All the cliffs of that country have fresh edges, all the light that cuts between them from the westering sun lies yellowly along the sod. All the winds of its open spaces smell of sage, and all its young rivers are swift. They begin thin and crystalline from under the forty-foot drifts, grow thick and brown in the hot leaps of early summer, run clear with full, throaty laughter in mid-season, froth and

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cloud to quick, far-off rains, fall off to low and golden and mottled rills before the first of the snows."

We were always alone. Mary wished it that way. Many times she said, "I can imagine no happier arrangement than to be shut away in a room lined with books from floor to ceiling, and with no opening except some place where food could be brought to me and taken away."

Knowing the demands, the distractions, the cruel criticism that hedged her about, sapping her full capacity for endeavor, I began to understand her seeming ingratitude and resentment of a curiosity which, she suspected, often prompted friendly overtures.

In spite of our intimacy, we never discussed those things which are usually uppermost in the minds of women when they visit together. The gossip of the town which she must have been conscious of and which I was continually hearing never intruded on our evenings together. She never mentioned her husband. At times she talked of Ruth, revealing something of her overwhelming grief and disappointment, but I was grateful that she never questioned me directly about the prognosis in her case. I could not have reassured her and I think she was afraid of what my answer might be.

It was not until later that I heard from Dera Pyle that Mary had said, "When I found I was going to have a child I wanted the smartest child that could be born so I doubled my brain activity."

But I realized that to a woman, so mentally alive, so sensitive to beauty of form and expression, this vacuity of mind in a lovely vessel, for Ruth was beautiful to look at, meant an even greater tragedy to her than it might to less highly organized individuals.

Mothers, feeling that a subnormal child needs them more than the normal members of their family, often lavish care and affection on it out of all proportion to its need or ability to enjoy. Society has grown to accept this exaggerated solicitude as the proper maternal attitude toward an underprivileged child and resents any deviation.

For that reason I did not share the antagonism which the majority of people felt toward Mary for what they considered her inhuman treatment and final desertion of her child. Forced to a realization that all her hopes and plans for the child were frustrated Mary did, what, it seemed to me, was the only intelligent thing to do under the circumstances. She placed Ruth with kind people on a farm where good food, eggs, milk and butter were available in the best possible surroundings.

The Fragers had no family and they grew fond of Ruth who ran like a sprite through the garden. The passionate, ungovernable spells when she screamed and fought like an animal had no power to hurt them as they had to unnerve and incapacitate her mother.

It was only after heart-breaking and unsuccessful attempts to keep Ruth with her and still be able to go on with her work, that Mary had arrived at the conclusion which had at first shocked me when she said, "I make Ruth nervous and she makes me nervous. It is not good for us to be together."

I saw that Mary felt she could provide a better home and better care for Ruth by teaching and writing than she could by abandoning her work and devoting herself to the child, handicapped as she would be by inadequate resources. But she did not disclose to me, and of that small community only the Manxman's family knew

what I afterwards learned from them. Mary had been advised that when Ruth was older there might be a chance, through an operation, of finding and relieving the condition that had retarded her mental development. Perhaps she hesitated to ask my opinion regarding surgical interference, fearing that I would be skeptical of the outcome. But she worked prodigiously that she might be able to provide means to that end beyond the family resources.

The Manxman lived on a large sheep ranch about four miles south of Bishop. Mary Austin describes him thus in *The Flock*, "In time I grew to know the owner of the flocks bearing the Three Legs of Man, and as I sat by his fire, touching his tempered spirit as one half draws and drops a sword in its scabbard for pleasure of its fineness, being flockwise I understood why the herders hereabout gave him the name of the Best Shepherd."

Even as the Manxman was known as the Best Shepherd, his wife was no less renowned for her generous hospitality and motherliness; her sturdy, comely body, her kind smile, her proud rearing of lusty sons and daughters.

Two of the young people were students at the Academy when Mary was teaching there and living at the Drake Hotel with Ruth. They felt sorry for her and invited her to spend the week-end at the ranch. From that time on she was a frequent visitor. The Manx family lived well. There would be roast lamb with potatoes baked in the same dish, creamy rice puddings, custards, cottage cheese, milk and cream, butter and home-made bread. "It doesn't seem possible there is so much food in the world," Mary would say. "I have been so hungry!"

There was a great open fireplace before which Mary would sit, holding Ruth, trying to talk to her and saying, "It's so nice to have a fireplace!"

One of the first things she would do when she came to the ranch would be to pull out her long hairpins and let down her hair. She explained that the weight of it pulled on her neck, and the wife of the Manxman liked her because she was so natural and didn't care what people thought.

Years later Mary loosed her heavy hair when, under emotional stress she walked the streets of Independence and afterwards in New York while she was in the throes of writing of the crucifixion of Christ. This gesture, which Mrs. Watterson thought so natural, seemed ridiculous to people who felt she was endeavoring to attract attention by being eccentric.

Eliza Watterson, the Best Shepherd's wife, recognized Mary Austin's ability and felt she was sensitive and humiliated. She compared her to little children who are self-conscious and put up a big bluff to put things over. "She has been so hurt herself," she said, "it is as though the milk had curdled—she is bitter."

Under such pleasant circumstances Mary was able to resume her observations of sheep and sheep dogs and the men who follow the flocks. She grew familiar with the signs used by the herders in communicating with the dogs, signs which interpreted meant, "Sheep missing on the left, go and find them. Round the flock and hold. Round and bed the flock." Experimenting with the dogs Mary found further proof of the discovery she had made at Mountain View: that by using signs and sentences relating to some incident in which they had taken part, she could recall that incident to them and

they would give evidence of their pleasure in the story, and would come to her as a child would and ask her to tell it over again; thus strengthening her conviction that the story pattern is older than man.

Sometime after my first meeting with Mary Austin I decided to join her art class at the Academy. I was quite accustomed to taking my fee in the form of a horse or buggy, or produce on which I could realize. Not that my services were paid for in chips and whetstones, by any means; the people of Owen's River Valley were not that sort.

Nevertheless, whatever my leanings may have been toward art, I am quite sure I would never have joined the class had it not been for a trade and barter idea in the back of my head, an idea that in that way my services would not be so great a drain on the Austins' family purse.

Added to that was my real admiration for Mary Austin and a desire to see more of her.

This happened at the time when my sweetheart used to ride down from the Wild Rose Mine to see me and one day I took him along to the class. We were working on crayon free-hand drawings at the time and the class met out of doors, under the big poplar trees.

I remember sitting before my easel and wondering what I would draw when Mary Austin came up and suggested, "Why not sketch Doctor Doyle?" Of course, to my mind, there could have been no more stimulating subject for brush or crayon. Doctor Doyle obligingly seated himself as directed. I started industriously on the sketch but found I was quite unable to put down what I saw.

Soon Mary came back, saw what a mess I was making of things, put her hand over mine, directing the crayon, and soon Doctor Doyle's firm face and splendid physique began to emerge on paper, crude but true to life.

Just as she directed my hand that day it has always seemed to me she directed our eyes to see the beauty which, though always before us, we did not grasp or comprehend until she showed us the way to look.

In the *Scholastic Magazine*, 1934, Carl Van Doren wrote of Mary Austin: "Her books were wells driven into America to bring up water for her countrymen though they might not have realized their thirst."

She did that in Inyo County, teaching us to realize the beauty all around us through her first book: *The Land of Little Rain*. "There are certain peaks and canyons and clear meadow spaces which are above all compassing of words, and have a certain fame as of the nobly great to whom we give no familiar names.— Guided by these you may reach my country and find not, according as it lieth in you—"

But out of that art lesson came an embarrassing announcement for me. Gossip reported that Mary Austin had said, "Doctor Doyle has the finest pair of legs in Bishop." How tongues wagged over that! What a preposterous thing for a woman to say! But, of course, everyone knew she had amorous designs on every male with whom she came in contact! Did she not always manage to keel over when there was a good-looking man around?

I am not trying to make out a case for Mary Austin. I have reason to believe she was as hungry for a really passionate experience as she was for the other things that life had doled out for her so meagerly. I doubt

whether she would have been able to sustain such an experience. It would have had to come to her as it did to the Walking Woman in *Lost Borders*. " 'I stayed with Filon until fall,' said she, 'All that summer in the Sier-ras, until it was time to turn south on the trail. It was a good time, and longer than he could have been expected to have loved one like me. And, besides, I was no longer able to keep the trail—' "

All Mary Austin's novels, it seems to me fall short by just the margin that such an experience would have given her.

CHAPTER XVII

AFTER HER MOTHER'S DEATH MARY arrived at a crisis in her life when she felt the need of something beyond an emotional religious experience. In reply to her urgent inquiries about prayer Mother had always answered, "Well, when I had difficulties I couldn't get over any other way I prayed about it."

"And did you get what you prayed for?"

"I got what was God's will for me to have."

"But did you get what you prayed for?"

"I got an answer."

"But how? What kind?"

Finally Mary understood that her mother got a sense of having touched something out beyond herself, and through that contact she was reconciled.

Finding no satisfactory answer to this question in her own mind or in orthodox Protestant Christianity, Mary turned to the nearest available source for enlightenment.

She asked the Paiute Medicine Man, "Do you truly get what you pray for?"

"Surely, if you pray right."

And Mary found that prayer to the Medicine Man had nothing to do with emotion. It was an act, an outgoing act of the inner self toward something, not a god, but a responsive activity in the world about you, which he designated as the Friend of the Soul of Man.

It was then Mary began her search for a more satisfying experience, a different conception of God than

the one which she says in *The Man Jesus*,* “—was presented to my youth by his ministers of a church that signified its appreciation of redemption from sin by a great particularity of behavior, pragmatical, thumping the pulpit cushions, leaning out of high heaven to begrudge me the joy of a blossoming meadow because it fell on Sunday.”

Questioning the Indians further, she was told that asking was not enough, that one must first by a motion of his own soul, his Sacred Middle, establish communication with the Friend of the Soul of Man. She found that the beating of drums, the dancing and singing, instead of being used, as the white people supposed, to attract God's attention, were done to free the individual from the besetting distractions of his environment. They were akin to the Catholic processions, the incense and music; accessories that liberated the soul on its spiritual quest.

Thus the soul, rid of material limitations, swings in its true arc, tuned and timed in relation to the source of all energy. Mary recognized a sincerity of faith, an expectation of spiritual response in Indian prayer that she had not found elsewhere.

Always in advance of her time, she arrived at what our modern religious groups hail as a new method of approach to the source of omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent good. She began to practice that out-going of the inner self toward a responsive activity for which we have found no better name than the Friend of the Soul of Man.

Later she disclosed the method of prayer which she found effective, the mental release and physical healing

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which had come to her through prayer in that remarkable book, *Can Prayer Be Answered?**

"In the three years of which my mother's death was the determining event," she writes in *Earth Horizon*, "orthodox Christianity was not the only circle of dark cloud that disappeared from round me into the wide horizon of the sun. It was largely my own unwillingness to cause her unnecessary distress that kept it there so long.

"It is impossible to convey the freshness of conviction with which the experience of prayer so initiated broke upon the intelligence.—It was not all at once that these alterations in spiritual orientation took place. As experience it had its origin in intellectual curiosity made personal by desperate need; in that singular actor's gift which Mary so seldom turned to any other purpose than that of initiating new experiences; putting on the character of an Indian woman; making, without in the least realizing that that was what she was doing, man's immemorial gesture of getting inside the universe by imitating it."

This gift that Mary had of losing herself in the dramatic experience of others is illustrated by something that happened at the Birchim ranch in Round Valley. Old Man Birchim was one of the largest sheep-owners in the Owen's River country. His large ranch in the rather isolated settlement near the foot of the grade leading into the mountains where the sheep were driven to summer pasture was surrounded by Indian campodies. The son, Will Birchim, had learned the Indian language, and their folk-lore was as familiar to him as Mother Goose rhymes to other children. As he grew older he

took over the care of his father's flocks and accumulated a wide knowledge of sheep and their habits.

Always following the trail to more intimate understanding of the things she planned to write about, Mary used to go to the Birchim ranch to talk with Will.

It was from Frances, Will Birchim's wife, and a girlhood friend of mine, that I heard of Mary Austin's visits to the ranch. Among my photographs there is a faded one taken in the Birchim garden against a background of hollyhocks. Grandfather Birchim with piercing eyes, bushy white hair and mustache is seated in the foreground, dressed for the occasion in a dark suit and boots. Grandmother, partly screened by the hollyhocks, sits beside him. Her erect dignity is topped by a dressy flower-trimmed hat. Will, in shirt-sleeves and with his cowboy hat a-slant stands between them, a heavy mustache dividing his face horizontally. Frances, in a belted Mother Hubbard dress stands at one side. Mary, looking slight and frail and serious in a white shirt waist and a gored black skirt that reaches to the ground is in the background. Wallace stands beside her. He is the only collared and tied man in the group. His mustache only serves to emphasize the weakness of his chin. His round straw hat, set far back on his head, and his hand thrust would-be-nonchalantly in his trouser's pocket give a feeling of self-consciousness to the pose.

Will had a good voice and he would sing or chant the Indian music for Mary. Often Mr. Austin's sister who visited them in Bishop came with them and, since she was a musician, would take down the words and endeavor to catch the tune and time. Undoubtedly this was the beginning of the study of the *American Rhythm*.

Frances described one scene which illustrated Mary's

gift for entering into new experiences. Will told the story of an Indian who was repulsed by the girl he loved. He faced the East, North, South and West, chanting continuously, showing how the Indian kept this up ceaselessly for several days until he died.

Mary seemed completely overcome. She went into a sort of trance. Will left the room after telling the story. She was wholly unconscious of his going. Mr. Austin finally took her home in a dazed condition.

"What was the reaction of the old people to the Austins?" I asked.

"Well, we had the most colossal thing that was bred and fostered in the West—good looks—success— Things not to be touched by all the learning in Christendom. Grandfather had no use for educated people. He considered them piffing and flighty. He called them Philly-loo birds."

They all thought Mary Austin was homely and unattractive. They would not have blamed Mr. Austin if he had had her committed to an asylum. They felt sorry for him. He seemed so patient and devoted to her.

Will is gone long ago but after *Can Prayer Be Answered?* was published Frances wrote me, "The more I recall Mary Austin's history the more wonderful she becomes. To me she was one of the most colorless humans I have ever known. She was a mark for ridicule and, I believe, had few friends. Recently I read an outline of her book on prayer. I did not try to get the book as I was afraid I would be disappointed. But in the brief review she questions, 'To whom do we pray and why is it only prayer will satisfy?' At last Mary and I are agreed after more than a quarter of a century. Oxford and the West met?"

Mary, always searching, had found a source of comfort and inspiration. In *Earth Horizon* she wrote, "It is enough to say that the existence of a practice of prayer as a studious motion of consciousness had already begun by the time I returned to Lone Pine to teach with my husband in the autumn of 1897. It is described, because it proved, though in the beginning I had no notion that this would be the case, the answer to the problem of creative activity."

When Mary returned to Lone Pine as assistant teacher she was surprised that there were objections raised to her occupying that position because she was a married woman. Their friends felt that Wallace was very liberal to allow her to earn money! Yet many of them knew that the failure of his various schemes had left them heavily in debt.

A horror of debt was one of the things that Mary had inherited from her mother. She was willing to go against public opinion in order that they might rid themselves of the burden that for ten years had been an inescapable responsibility. Finally with their joint incomes and the added salary which Wallace received as superintendent of schools they were able to meet the most pressing obligations.

But this prospect of ultimately arriving at financial security was short-lived. Mary, who outside of her teaching hours had made encouraging progress with her writing, failed to realize, as she was prone to do, that her nervous and intellectual output was more than her never robust physical condition could support. She was obliged to go to the hospital in Los Angeles.

During her absence Wallace did what it was evident

he had been planning to do all along, resigned his teaching position, left his unexpired term as County Superintendent of Schools for Mary to fill as best she could on her return, and took a position as registrar of the Desert Land Office at Independence.

Mary resented her husband's action. It meant that they would go on living in a small town on a meager salary. She had never become resigned to the kind of life he evidently wished to live. She had worked and planned to the end that they might get away from Inyo into some locality where the chances to "get into something" which Wallace was always expecting to have happen to him, was more liable to come about and where the environment would be more suited to her activities.

Wallace had not consulted her about the move but had accomplished it with the greatest secrecy, apparently to forestall any objection she might make. He had decided that this solitary, easy-going life was acceptable to him without even considering that it might not be suitable for or acceptable to Mary. He was following the traditional pattern. If a man made a home for his wife she was supposed to live in it and like it.

But Mary rebelled against the pattern. Neighbors tell how they would see her with her hair down pacing the floor at night and railing at Wallace. Sometimes Mary was able to rouse him somewhat from his smug satisfaction. Then Wallace would seem to comprehend that she was not just talking—that she was really distressed over the hopelessness of their ever being able to make anything of their life together, and she was going to do something about it. Sometimes he would be roused to the possibility that she really would do something, and be provoked to remind her of the pattern.

"Well, but I am the one who has to decide that—where we live and everything. I'll get into something." Or sometimes he would even relent so far as to say, "Well, of course, if I had known you were not going to like it!"

For the seven years that were to be the last of their married life, the Austins lived in Independence, the little town that lies on the slope of Kearsarge, that regal peak that juts eastward from the Sierra Nevada mountains. There were three streets in the town and three hundred people lived in unattractive houses on those streets which petered out into the desert by dusty wind-breaks and that ever constant fringe of tin cans that edges a desert town.

The main building was the County Court House whose activities with that of the sheep, cattle and mining interests, supported the hotel, three stores and two saloons that straggled along the main street. A willow banked stream flowed down to the town and small farms at scattered intervals reclaimed the desert along its course. Above the farms there was a campody and an Indian school.

Mary came to find it a friendly town, always on tip-toe, expecting something to happen: that a bonanza mine would be opened up, that a big irrigation project would be started, that a broad-gauge railroad would be built through the valley to Los Angeles.

Seven years Mary waited and nothing did happen. At last she knew that she could not go on, that Wallace had no plan for himself or their life together. He would liked to have been engaged in some pleasurable occupation where there were adequate financial returns

but as long as his present, poorly paid office which offered no chance of advancement continued he was content to go on always expecting to get into something. All of the men of the country seemed to have been inoculated with the same virus. They continued to vision new projects; something that was sure to happen soon.

Meanwhile Mary studied the country and the people. She entered into the community life. She missed the color that had been part of the Mexican settlement of Lone Pine, but there was a Chinatown where the cooks and laborers from the mines congregated. When Chinese New Year's came around, Sing Lee, her wash boy, brought her a silk handkerchief, a lily bulb and a box of Chinese candy. To show her appreciation, Mary made a chocolate cake and presented it to Sing Lee.

The next day, when the table to the ancestors was set out in the plaza, Mary's cake was placed in the center, decorated, as befitted the occasion, with punk sticks and fire-crackers. That afternoon a committee of ladies from the town called upon her and asked her to explain why she had given a cake to a Chinaman. It was an embarrassing moment for Mary and it was evident that her explanation did not satisfy them. Those things were just not done, and they evidently felt that she was lacking in an understanding of proper social distinctions.

This was not the only occasion when she was brought to task. There was disapproval of her taking part in the Indian dances, and, most momentous in its consequences, there was the detour from the beaten path that caused her to be read out of the Methodist Church.

Mary had joined the church in Bishop. Later developments in her religious life having given her a differ-

ent opinion of her own need, she failed to take out her letter from the church in Bishop and transfer to the one in Independence. But she attended the services and taught a Bible Class. Since her teaching was somewhat revolutionary, including the Higher Criticism, an attempt to find out what the Bible did mean literally to those who wrote it, they were not approved by the resident pastor. He communicated with the presiding elder regarding her views. In very short order Mary was read out of the church.

Their action struck her as of no especial importance, but had she realized its repercussions in the attitude of the church-going people of the community, she would have stood out against them. The fact that she had started a Community Theater had no small part in influencing the church against her.

Interesting people began to find their way into Inyo County: people from the Sierra Club, botanists, explorers, geologists, collectors of Indian baskets. They were directed to Mary because she knew something about those things. She met writers: Charles Howard Shinn, Stewart Edward White. When it became necessary to go to Los Angeles on account of her health, she visited in the home of Charles Lummis, the editor of a magazine called *The Land of Sunshine*. She found in Eve, his wife, a sympathetic friend in whom she could confide some of the problems with which she was struggling.

While in Los Angeles Mary visited the Normal School and overheard an eastern teacher trying to tell her class about a coyote. The teacher had never seen a coyote, knew nothing of its habits, and was not depicting it very successfully. Mary asked if she might talk to the

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class. In a few minutes the director of the school disappeared and quickly returned with the entire teaching staff to hear what she had to say. The following day she was invited to give a course of lectures on Western Nature Study to the teachers in the model school.

At last Mary had found a way out. Her income from this position would be sufficient to live on until Wallace could get into something. She wrote to him. She believed that he would come, now that she had made a way. She urged him to break away from Inyo and take a chance with her. It was necessary for him to decide immediately as the Normal School opening would not wait.

But Wallace refused to consider it. He could not get her viewpoint. He had never been able to get it. The years she had been away had not brought them any closer together. It had only enabled Wallace to become more completely enamoured of his life in Inyo. He said he would not come to her but if she wanted to stay another year he was willing that she should.

Mary felt that the year away, instead of bringing them together as she had hoped, had only served to dig a deeper chasm between them. She knew if she stayed away another year she would never go back. She still clung to the hope that some way she and Wallace would be able to work out their problem together. She relinquished the opportunity and returned to Independence.

She and Wallace built a house at the end of the street that ran out toward the Kearsarge Pass. It was a simple home but in it she tried to assemble something of comfort and beauty. With her own hands she built the fireplace with rock brought in from Fort Inde-

pendence. An olla jug on the porch, a few hanging baskets, Mission furniture, gave an atmosphere strange to the people of the town who were critical of her foolish ideas.

She finished the *Land of Little Rain*, writing it to the rhythm of the twenty-mule freight teams that traveled the old Mojave stage road. The book was dedicated—To Eve—the Comfortress of Unsuccess.

In the preface she wrote: "If you ever come across the borders as far as the town that lies in a little hill dimple at the foot of Kearsarge, never leave it until you have knocked at the door of the brown house under the willow tree at the end of the village street, and there you will have such news of the land, of its trails and what is astir in them, as one lover of it can give to another."

I have at hand some of the critical reviews that appeared after the *Land of Little Rain* was published. They unite in enthusiastic praise of the book. Special comments arrest the attention: "Sincere congratulations to Mrs. Mary Austin of Independence who is exploiting a new field in which she is a literary pioneer." Another, "Readers who have the instinct to feel the right use of words recognize in this new writer a literary artist."

The book was given a handsome format with illustrations by E. Boyd Smith but that it carried by its intrinsic merit is shown by the commentator who wrote, "None of these pictures, with the cunning of the artist's hand, bring out the country with its human and animal dwellers as does a single paragraph of Mrs. Austin's work. Indeed such illustrations of such fine descriptive work as hers seems almost an impertinence."

Other more explicit comments were—"Minute obser-

vation—rare grace and expressiveness of style—portrayal of character, whether of miner, Indian squaw or Greaser is as notable for pathos and quiet humor as for its intimate appreciation of the spirit of their lives.

Before *The Land of Little Rain* appeared, Mary Austin's publishers asked for a biographical sketch. Her reply is given in full in *The Women Who Make Our Novels*,* by Grant Overton. It is a remarkable human document. It shows how illuminating the story of a life can appear without revealing any of the conflicting undercurrents. Because it is an interesting study in psychology, a fine example of exaggeration and restraint, I give it in full.

There is the following introduction by Grant Overton: "Spelling and punctuation, even though inadvertent, have been faithfully transcribed for the sake of preserving something intensely human in the personal sketch below."

Independence, Calif.

Nov, 5th, 1902.

"Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin and Co;

Gentlemen;

Enclosed you will find the biographical sketch of my life and some account of my work, in reply to your request for the same. I have no doubt that you can get some expression from Mr. Muir in regard to my book, 'A Land of Little Rain'. but I will take pains to make sure of the matter and write you again in regard to it. Charles F. Lummis, editor of Our West, and George Hamlin Fitch, literary editor of the San Francisco Chronicle, and also the reviewer

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of the Argonaut can be counted on to give me some friendly notice, especially Lummis, as he is my first and warmest friend in the West.—I have written the biographical sketch in the third person to avoid the use of so many 'I's' which always makes me miserable, you can cut out that which is not to the point.

Sincerely Yours

Mary Austin.

(Written)

P. S. I am afraid you will be disappointed with the notes but it is the best I can do.

(Enclosure. Typewritten.)

"Mary Hunter Austin was born in Carlinville, Illinois, descended on her mother's side from the family of the celebrated French chemist, Daguerre. Being born fortunately before the flood of so called children's books, she began to be familiar with the English classics as soon as she could read, and the study of these and an intimate acquaintance with nature occupied most of her years until the end of her university work. At that time very serious ill-health drove her to California, and a friendly destiny provided that she should settle in the new and untamed lands about the Sierra Nevadas and the desert edges. Although not yet twenty she had already made some preparation for following the profession of teaching, and in the unconventional life of mining towns, and in the wick-i-ups of the Indians found exceptional opportunity for pushing her investigation in child study.

"Mrs. Austin's work in this direction met with instant recognition in her state, and before long many excellent positions were open to her, but by this time she discovered she did not want them. Like most

desert dwellers, Mrs. Austin had come under the spell of its mystery, and after teaching a short time in the Los Angeles Normal School, was glad to return to the life of the hills, and soon after began to devote herself seriously to writing. Very early her work attracted the attention of the Atlantic Monthly, St. Nicholas and the Youth's Companion. Most of the monthly magazines have published work of hers.

"All of Mary Austin's work is like her life, out of doors, nights under the pines, long days watching by waterholes to see the wild things drink, breaking trail up new slopes, heat, cloud bursts, snow; wild beasts and mountain bloom, all equally delightful because understood.

(At this point the typewriting stops; the biographical notes continue in ink. Mrs. Austin writing on both sides of the sheets of paper.)

"N. B. I can't do it, when I wrote the letter that accompanies this I thought it would be easy to do, but it isn't. There is really nothing to tell. I have just looked, nothing more, when I was too sick to do anything else I would lie out under the sage brush and look, and when I was able to get about I went to look at other things, and by and by I got to know when and where looking was most worth while. Then I got so full of looking that I had to write to get rid of some of it and make room for more. I was only a month writing 'A Land of Little Rain' but I spent twelve years peeking and prying before I began it. After awhile I will write a book about my brother, the coyote which will make you 'sit up'. I mean that is the way I feel about it.

"I have considered a long while to see if I have

any interesting eccentricities such as make people want to buy the books of the people who have them, but I think not. You are to figure to yourself a small, plain, brown woman, with too much hair, always a little sick, and always busy about the fields and mesas in a manner, so they say in the village, as if I should like to see anybody try to stop me.

"Years ago I was a good shot, but as I grew more acquainted with the ways of wild folks I found it lie heavily on my conscience and latterly I have given it up. I have a house by the rill of Pine Creek, looking toward Kearsarge, and the sage brush grows up to the door. As for the villagers they have accepted me on the same basis as the weather, an institution which there is no use trying to account for. Two years ago I delivered the Fourth of July oration here, and if, when there is no minister of any sort here, I go and ring the church bell, they will come in and hear me in the most natural manner.

"When I go out of this valley (Owen's) to attend or to talk to large educational meetings I ride 130 miles in the stage across the desert to Mojave, and the driver lets me hold the lines. Once when he said the water of Mojave made him sick I put him inside and took the stage in from Red Rock to Coyote Holes. The other passengers who were a barber with a wooden leg, and a Londoner, head of a mining syndicate, took care of my baby. You see I was the only one who knew how to drive four horses.

"For a long time before I came to Independence I lived in Lone Pine where the population is two thirds Mexican and there gained the knowledge of their character which informs many of my stories.

I should say that my husband who is Registrar of the U. S. Land office, is also a botanist and much of my outdoor life is by way of assisting his field work.

"Now for my work the best is "A Land of Little Rain" and the child verse in St. Nicholas. I think the best and worst of it is that I am a little too near to my material. Where I seem to skimp a little I can understand now that the book is cold, it is only that I presupposed a greater knowledge in the reader. During the last six months I have discovered that the same thing is happening to me that I complained of in Jimville. The desert has 'struck in'. But I shall do better work and still better. I am pleased to learn through some of my editor friends that my verse is better paid for and more widely copied than the average product of versemakers and I conceive it possible that this might be traced to the influence of Paiute and Shoshone medicine men and Dancers who are the only poets I personally know. For consider how I get nearer to the roots of the poetic instinct among these single hearted savages than any other where. But if I write at length upon this point you will say with my friend, Kern River Jim, 'This all blame foolishness'.

"And this brings me to my work among the Indians in which I am somewhat misrepresented. If I deny what is commonly reported, that the Indians regard me worshipfully for the good I do, then is the denial taken for modesty which is not, but merely the truth. They tell me things because I am really interested and a little for the sake of small favors but mostly because I give them no rest until I do. Says

my friend, Kern River Jim; "What for you learn them Injun songs? You can't sing um, You go learn songs in a book, that's good enough for you." Nevertheless I have been able to do them nearly as much good as they have done me.

"This is the best I can do for you in this way, but whatever you are minded to say of my work say this—that I have been writing only four or five years and have not yet come to my full power, nor will yet for some years more."

Reading this letter written by Mary Austin to her publishers always reminds me of the comment made by the wife of the Manxman, "She was like little children who are self-conscious and put up a big bluff to put things over."

Mary was frankly looking for the things that "make people want to buy the books of the people who have them." It must have been difficult to make such a nice pleasant story out of the tragedy of her life. No wonder she wrote, "I can't do it. I thought it would be easy to do, but it isn't."

CHAPTER XVIII

EVEN AFTER *A LAND OF LITTLE RAIN* WAS acclaimed by critics the people of Independence, with few exceptions, neither understood nor appreciated the spell of enchantment that Mary had found in what to them were the ordinary, common-place things of life.

Among the sketches in *A Land of Little Rain* was a charming one entitled *My Neighbor's Field*. Mary wrote, "It is one of those places God must have meant for a field from all time." She pictured it, "lying very level at the foot of the slope that crowded up against Kearsarge, falling slightly toward the town." She outlined its boundaries "North and South it is fenced by low, old glacial ridges, boulder strewn and untamable. Eastward it butts on orchard closes and the village gardens, brimming over into them by wild briar and creeping grass." She tells how when she discovered it "—in the charm of its spring smiling, I knew I would have no peace until I had bought ground and built me a house beside it, with a little wicket to go in and out at all hours, as afterwards came about."

The townspeople read this description of what to them was a worthless piece of land which didn't even provide firewood. The soil was so poor that the land had never been plowed but been allowed to run wild to weeds whose seeds came down the irrigating ditches and infested the gardens and lawns with weeds. The only use the field had been put to was a place for

slaughtering cattle. A story is told of how Lang, of Lang and Kehoe, substantial cattlemen of the country, read *My Neighbor's Field* and made a special visit to the spot. He rested his arms on the fence and exclaimed, "I don't see how anybody could make a story out of that!"

The adage, "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country," was never more truly exemplified than in the case of Mary Austin. The people of Owen's River Valley discredited her work. Not being able to see the people and the country through her eyes, they resented her deviation from the facts as they saw them. They discussed the domestic relations of the Austin family; how patient and devoted Mr. Austin was to his wife; how he took her breakfast to her in bed because she insisted she could not be burdened with that domestic office when she needed the morning hours for her writing. How, although she treated him with the greatest respect, she never showed any affection for him. How she farmed Ruth out to the care of other people when she should have been attending to and teaching her herself.

They failed to remember that, through her writing, Mary was able to furnish a better home and more efficient care for the child than she had been able to give her while she was trying to keep house and contend against the growing demands that the child made on her strength and nerves.

"I make Ruth nervous and she makes me nervous. It is better for us to be apart." Through what trying ordeals had Mary been forced to that conclusion!

Neighbors told how they would hear the child crying until they could endure it no longer and would

go to the house to find out what was the trouble. There they would find the child strapped in a chair, screaming, and Mary, pacing the floor, her hair down her back, trying to capture some idea that eluded her for the writing she was always working at. They did not remind themselves that it was impossible to control Ruth or teach her anything and that no one was willing to keep her long because it was too nerve-wracking.

They took sides with Mr. Austin. He was so kind and gentle and everyone liked him. They said that much of the material, the knowledge of botany and geology that Mary had used in *A Land of Little Rain*, had been stolen from Mr. Austin. That he had willingly given her all the information he had on the subject and she had used it as her own without giving him any credit.

In reality her knowledge of botany and geology that went into that volume had its beginnings in the old Blackburn University and in the copy of *Old Red Sandstone*, the first book that Mary bought for herself.

In her efforts to foster some common bond between them, she had tried to interest Wallace Austin in botany, but he never went beyond the collector's interest of naming and classifying. The way in which various species of shrubs and flowers adjusted themselves to climate and desertness and drought held no fascination for him as it did for her.

Their camping trips into the mountains, which were one of the chief outlets offered in the way of entertainment, were marred by a secret antagonism, a failure to co-operate. The plans for these outings must always originate with Wallace and be followed out according to his schedule, even though it proved dis-

trekking and aggravating for both of them. He never learned to accommodate his plans to Mary's strength and capacity for endurance, yet he never willingly went without her.

The trips were always associated with too much weariness and too little comradeship to make them a happy experience or the memory of them a pleasant one. Mary found herself faced with the inheritance of midwestern women: "Maternal leniency which rejoiced in what pleased him, and refrained in chiding his failures too much." She was subject to the perpetual torment of a creative talent, not yet accommodated to its proper medium, the harassment of the lead horse, held too precious to be allowed to pull in harness, and not free to seek its proper pastures.

So Mary Austin found herself in the position of her heroine in *A Woman of Genius*,* "I found myself driven apart from the community interest by a hostile tide across which Higgleston gazed at me with strange, begrudging eyes—"

But even though the townspeople failed to see eye to eye with her, yet she endeavored to contribute her talent and neighborliness to the town. The church in Independence had only an itinerant pastor at that time and often Judge Dehy was called upon to preach a funeral sermon. Mary would go with him in the horse and buggy and, in his absence, she would lead the service. She often said to him, "If you survive me and you are where you can I wish you would say the final word at my funeral."

There were a few congenial neighbors, Mrs. Gunn whose husband was Jack Gunn, the saloon keeper, and

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Mrs. Webb the wife of a cattle-man. The Gunns owned a mine, the Murietta, which gave the title to one of the stories which Mary Austin included in *Lost Borders*. Mrs. Webb was the woman friend in *The Readjustment*, another of the stories in the book.

Mary gave parties for the little girls and taught them how to make party calls of thirty minutes and other social observances. Helen Gunn remembers what a good time she had at those parties but my niece, who lived at Independence, says she felt like a butterfly on a pin, as if Mary was studying her all the time.

This interest in other children was undoubtedly stimulated through a desire to help Ruth by observing the reactions of normal children. Into the tale of *The Basket Maker* in the *Land of Little Rain* Mary wove a poignant cry from the tragedy of her own life experience: "‘A man,’ says Seyavi of the campody, ‘Must have a woman, but a woman who has a child will do very well.’"

While Mary was working on her second book, *The Basket Woman*, little Helen Gunn, who was very fond of her, used to go over and take care of Ruth. Mary had studied the Paiutes, among the finest basket weavers of the California tribes. She spent hours at their campodies, taking part in their rituals, steeping herself in their folk-lore, observing how they communicated through thought transference with other members of the tribe while they were miles away. She learned, too, how with twig and root and bark they wove the pattern of their lives into their baskets.

Having finished *The Basket Woman*, Mary began *The Flock*. Into it she put the intimate knowledge of dogs and sheep and their herders which she had ac-

quired, "By two years of homesteading on the borders of Tejon, by fifteen by the long trail as it spindles out into Inyo, by all the errands of necessity and desire that made me to know its moods and the calendar of its shrubs and skies, by the chance of Sierra holidays where there were always bells jangling behind us in the pines or flocks blethering before us in the meadows, by the riot of shearings; by the faint winey smell in the streets of certain of the towns that appraises of the yearly inturn of the wandering shepherds, I grew aware of all that you read here and of much beside."

She was stimulated to the writing of the book, not only by the fact that she had looked and looked until she was so full of looking that she had to write it down and make room for something more, but by her ready championship of the underdog, her inborn desire to right a wrong as far as it lay in her power to do so.

Forest lands were being withdrawn. Grazing claims were being canceled. There were bitter struggles between the sheep-men and the cattle-men for the control of feeding grounds. There was the incident of the Forest Rangers who found a band of sheep grazing on government land on which the permit had been withdrawn and forced them over a cliff at whose foot they were found beaten and smothered to death.

While Mary was working on *The Flock* she returned to Bakersfield to renew the associations of the Beale ranch. Jim had married. His wife had died, leaving a child, and he now had a housekeeper in charge of his home. Mary lived with them.

She seemed queerer than ever to the townspeople.

Instead of writing in Jim's home, she hired a tiny room in one of the business buildings with only a table, a chair and a typewriter, and spent most of her time there.

She was still struggling with the problem of getting her thoughts onto paper. She was never satisfied until she found the right word. That no time spent or concentration endured to that end was too great is shown by an incident related by Mrs. Taylor, the wife of the head of the newly founded department of music in the schools.

The Taylors had a large front yard and two great fig trees, loaded with fruit. These trees gave welcome protection from the sun on hot summer days. Often Mary, on her way to Jim's house after having worked all day in her hot, little room, would stop and say, "Do you mind if I come in and rest awhile in the hammock?"

One day she came in looking completely worn out. "I worked four hours today," she said, "trying to get the right word to describe the hills to the East. But I got the word—puckery—and it is right!"

Only those who have seen that country can realize how right it is, but as you read in *The Flock*, "Well I know that country! A huge fawn-colored hollow drawn on its borders into puckery hills, gutted where they ran together by fierce, infrequent rains—" you find that no other words could have conveyed the picture quite as adequately.

While she was renewing her acquaintance with the shepherds and sheep-dogs that went into *The Flock*, Mary shocked the good people of Bakersfield by going

out to El Tejon and staying at the ranch house. There were no women there. She had a room and took her meals with the men.

While in Bakersfield Mary often used to ask mothers if they would let her come and tell stories to their children at bedtime. They consented willingly because the children were highly entertained, but still they criticized the fact that she often left her own child to cry itself to sleep. She was still trying for some solution, some key to unlock the dormant brain cells. "It will help me with Ruth to be with and understand normal children," she said.

Those were the beginning days of story-telling for children. Ernest Seton Thompson came to Bakersfield and all the children were invited to hear him tell stories about his pet skunk. Mary lectured before the Teacher's Institute and told children's stories to illustrate the manner in which a child's interest could be captured.

Mary returned to Independence before *The Flock* was accepted for publication. The town was agog over the murder trial of a young sheep-herder who was accused of killing the owner of the flock that he had in his charge, afterwards selling it as his own.

Sam Vermilyea, who afterwards became my brother-in-law, defended the suspected murderer. Sam was good at defense, and although Marianna, the owner of the flock, was found below Olancha, lying out in the sagebrush with his back sieved with knife wounds, in spite of all the evidence pointing to conviction, the young sheep-herder went free.

With a scent for material as sure as a bird dog for game, Mary saw the possibilities for a story and began working on her first novel, *Isidro*.

With the idea of using the romantic background of early California, when the missions were flourishing and Spaniards were great landholders, for the romance which she planned to weave, Mary went to Carmel to visit the Mission San Carlos Borromeo.

She stopped in San Francisco on the way and, through Eve Lummis, met a congenial group of contemporary writers: Theodore Hittel, California historian, Ina Coolbrith, Charles Warren Stoddard, John Muir, William Keith and Edwin Markham. They knew *A Land of Little Rain* and accepted her as a fellow craftsman. Mary felt herself drawn to them by the bond of shared interests.

At Coppa's restaurant she met George Sterling, Laffler, James Hopper, Xavier Martinez and the Newberrys. They became acquainted under the mellowing influence of a delicious meal of fresh shrimp, sanddabs, salads and dago red. She agreed to go with George the next day to fill the galleon on the Stevenson monument with violets, have tea and kumquats in a Chinese restaurant and then visit the Clay Street hotel and sit for awhile in the room that had been Robert Louis Stevenson's.

Sterling was living at Carmel. He had built a house on the hilltop. Often he went with Mary to the mission San Carlos Borromeo and together they reconstructed the scenes of Mission life which she used in *Isidro*.

There was no town then at Carmel, only a few farms and one or two buildings. Mary and George were alone much of the time. They explored the beaches, wandered over the Monterey hills hunting for pitch pine and bee trees, climbed Point Lobos where the

spray broke over the cliffs catching up the sea and sky in spectrum lights.

Years later in an article in *American Mercury*, *George Sterling at Carmel*, Mary recalled those early days with evident nostalgia.

"The Mission San Carlos Borromeo looks inshore up the valley of Carmel to the lilac colored crests of Santa Lucia;—off shore the view just clears the jaws of Lobos along the sun path between it and Cypress Point. Full in the crescent bay the sea lifts in a curve of chrysophrase, whose edge goes up in smoky foam along the hard packed beaches. Ever and ever, disregarding of the nondescript shacks, the redwood bungalows and psuedo-Spanish haciendas crowding one another between the beach and the highroad.

"But when I first came to this land a virgin thicket of buckthorne, sage and sea, blue lilac spread between well spaced, long leaved pines. The dunes glistened white with violet shadows, and in warm hollows between live oaks the wine of light had mellowed undisturbed a thousand years."

Mary established a reputation for queerness by building a wick-i-up in the trees. A winding stair led up to the so-called studio and Mary would ascend to it, have her food brought up to her and spend her time writing in the tree tops. This performance attracted a good deal of attention. The magazines took it up and embellished it.

Those were the days of Edmund Russel and Isadora Duncan and dress reform for women. Mary adopted a kind of Grecian robe, perhaps for economy and comfort, perhaps looking for greater freedom of expression in the release from the tyranny of clothes.

Bakersfield people, visiting Carmel to get away from the heat of the San Joaquin Valley, were ashamed to have anyone find out that they knew her. If they saw her coming along the street they crossed over to the other side to avoid meeting her.

Mary's roots were still in Owen's River Valley and when *Isidro* was finished she returned to Independence. When the book was published the critics were most enthusiastic. Not only had Mary written a charming romance of the old Spanish Mission days but she had woven into that story much of her knowledge of Indian life and lore and woodcraft.

Elia Wilkinson Peattie, mother of Donald Culross Peattie, the novelist who married Louise Redfield, also an author, was a contemporary of Mary's. She began her career as a reporter on the *Chicago Tribune* and *Omaha World*, later being literary editor of the *Tribune*. She was a progressive woman, interested in democratic and patriotic movements and woman's suffrage, and also a writer of short stories which appeared in the leading magazines. Since she was a cultured, cosmopolitan woman, it is interesting to read an article written by her for the *Saturday Evening Post* in which she gives an illuminating glimpse of the impression Mary Austin made on her at that time.

"Mrs. Austin lives out on the edge of Death Valley among Paiute Indians and makes her life with them. They are her neighbors and she neighbors with them in that fine and high sense of the word which men and women are coming to understand more and more. She nurses them, helps the women in their hours of greatest stress, combats their superstitions, adjudicates some of their quarrels, encourages them in their native arts and finds a

market for their wares. In California she is considered an authority in matters relating to the Indians.

"I met her first in that long, dark, barbaric hall where Charles Lummis receives his guests. The hall is of redwood, charred, and has the effect of being made of black velvet—only between the great rafters and beams there are panels of stucco.

"With her heavy mouth, her lowering eyes, her perfectly simple and unconscious manner, Mrs. Austin sat at table observing everything and saying nothing. It was a gay party. Lummis in his beautiful deerskins, his dinner costume, sat the head of his long table. The guests talked Spanish, French and English—and sang in those tongues, too. The guitars and mandolins stood against the chairs, and between the courses Mr. Lummis led the songs—mostly old Spanish ballads—and the others followed him. I never knew who all the guests were, although they had been graciously asked there to greet me after a long journey. Some of them were dark, matronly women, who spoke to me in Spanish, and who did not remove their mantillas all during the evening. They came at sunset, sang their rich songs, and vanished in the star-light. Mojave servants brought us food and curious drinks, gliding about in their moccasined feet, and when they were not occupied, threw themselves prone on the seats that ran around the room, and rested there, watching us with grave, curious eyes. When we begged it they went outside and sang a song of home-longing, beating sadly on their skin covered instruments. An hour or two of this went on before Mrs. Austin seemed to feel in fellowship with us, or at least before she would show herself responsive. When I reproached her for not hav-

ing answered a letter of compliment I had written her, she confessed that she had tried twenty times and had not known how. She was not used to praise. But she showed herself at least a valuable contributor to the evening's pleasure. When Mrs. Lummis begged her she repeated with passion and in a voice of vibrant beauty, some exquisite Paiute love songs which she had translated. She is not very much in love with civilization, preferring the desert with its ever changing beauty, and the grave, thoughtful, brown people who inhabit it."

When Mary began to mingle with people on the outside her apparent reserve was commented upon, often unkindly. They could not understand that it came from unease in a new environment. They thought her cold, shy, dull, proud, when she was in reality inarticulate and awkward socially; an outlier, with none of the social graces and peculiarly sensitive to her lack of them. A characteristic that renders shepherds, cowboys, trappers, forest rangers immune from intruding or imposing their company on others.

Mary had become intimately acquainted with forest rangers after *The Flock* was published. She became such a recognized authority that Theodore Roosevelt sent a forestry expert to interview her with a view to correcting some of the blunders that had been made through that service.

Then tragedy came to the Land of Little Rain. Los Angeles took the water on which the very life of Owen's River Valley depended. Insidiously her agents had acquired water rights which spelled the doom of the fertile valley.

Through her always sensitive intuitive faculty Mary foresaw the danger that threatened long before it was generally realized by the community. She rallied to the defense of her Land of Little Rain. She interviewed the most powerful of the agents of Los Angeles. After that interview he said, "By God, that woman is the only one who has brains enough to see where this thing is going!"

Finally the people of the valley were roused to the dire calamity that threatened their homes. They raised funds and sent a committee of men who represented the interests of Owen's River Valley to Washington to interview the Secretary of the Interior. He listened to them and made an appointment for them to have a conference with the President, Theodore Roosevelt.

After listening carefully to their statement of conditions, he called the Secretary of the Interior, "Mr. Secretary," he said, "I don't know how to do it, but I want it fixed so that the people of Los Angeles shall have the water of Owen's River Valley. I believe in the greatest good to the greatest number. That will be all, gentlemen!"

The people of the valley were powerless to control the situation. Mary was distraught. She walked in the fields of her Land of Little Rain, mentally struggling to find some way to save the valley from despoilation. She called on that power greater than the power of all men for guidance, but always there came the same answer to her questioning, "Nothing! Nothing!"

She could not stay to witness the desolation that would come to Inyo. She sold her house with the wish that she might never return to see the ravaged land.

CHAPTER XIX

MARY TOOK RUTH AND RETURNED TO Carmel. She had hoped that Wallace might go now with her. He was out of a job but still persisted in vaguely drifting with the hope of getting into something. She felt stricken, uprooted. The mental and physical strain through which she had passed took its toll and she became ill. Unable to care for Ruth she put her in a private institution. Wallace had always fought this move. He felt that the child should remain in the home even though all of the mother's time and strength was devoted to her care.

Mary built a house at Carmel. She tried to go on with her writing but the shock of her violent transplanting interfered with her work. She endeavored to make other contacts outside the rapidly growing colony at Carmel. A mutual friend had given her a letter to Mrs. Herbert Hoover.

Mrs. Hoover recalls that Mary presented herself and explained that she was anxious to meet men who had done things or were doing things out in the world. Since leaving Inyo the only people she seemed to have met were writers and artists. While she enjoyed their acquaintance and friendship tremendously she felt that in her work she needed to know both men and women who were doing practical things. Mrs. Hoover arranged for her to meet many engineers and professional people. She found Mary's accounts of her impressions while she was getting acquainted with what she called the

"outside world" most interesting. Evidently Mary grew more at ease among people and they were delighted to find her conversation as refreshing as her books.

But Mary was at loose ends. She was ill. She suffered from pain which the doctors said was caused by a malady so serious that in all probability she had not over nine months to live. The royalties from her books were sufficient to finance a trip. Some acquaintances were going to Italy and she decided to go with them. Given so short a lease of life, she wanted to enjoy some of the things that had been denied her.

That Mary was fully aware of being a woman alone is evidenced by the vivid description she gives of herself at that time.*

"A maverick, as you understand, has no brand or mark. He is a strayed and unparented yearling overlooked in the annual round-up, and thereafter whoever gets his iron on him claims him as his own.—What happens if you have drunk Hassayampa is that all places and time dissolve.—This is also one of the things that is liable to happen to Mavericks, for the river does not flow through the man herd. It is important to remember that it had already happened to me when I came back to the round-up and discovered myself without a brand of any description.

"And society had its iron out for me you may be sure! What they missed most in me, particularly when I came to talk of those things which, considering the profession I was struggling to adorn, I might be considered to know somewhat, was the mark of having been to Europe.—One characteristic of this particular

* *Christ in Italy*, Copyright by the Executors of the Estate of Mary Austin.

brand, the Brand of Having Been There, is a disposition to be pretentiously judicious about the performance of imported music, drama and the like, and a fear in respect to the native product, of not being judicious enough. To come back to the burgeoning field of American Art with that burned into you would be like being forbidden to walk in a garden because you couldn't tell which of the green heads coming up in it were to be peonies and which pumpkins, and any kind of a garden is to me a great exhilaration."

With only a year to live Mary felt she could take chances on escaping the Brand of Having Been There. She wanted to see Rome which she thought would be a place to die in. She counted her money and decided she had enough to die on.

In Italy Mary Austin met Cardinal Merry del Val. He had read her novel, *Isidro*, with interest because of its picture of the early Mission days in California. He was glad to talk with someone who was familiar with the Mission San Carlos Borromeo, the final resting place of that revered missionary of the Catholic faith, Padre Junipero Serra. He loaned her books from his library and introduced her to Mother Veronica of the Blue Nuns.

In *Earth Horizon* Mary Austin says, "It was Mother Veronica who taught me what to do about my pain; how to escape from it into prayer; how to leave it behind me. By the time we reached the cathedral of Siena it had receded. At Venice and Ronceno it disappeared. At Lake Como we met friends who noticed that I was not wearing the sling in which I had carried my left arm for months, and for the first time I observed it. There is no doubt that I had pronounced

symptoms of cancer of the breast and that I had evaded it. To understand how this happened you would have to read *Christ in Italy*, and realize how much like prayer is the attempt to get inside art and understand it, and how healing is the power of beauty; for by prayer I do not mean the practice of petition, but the studied attitude of the spirit in transaction with the creative attitude working from within."

Mary's friends were skeptical about her cure. Of course there was always the possibility of a mistaken diagnosis. Then, too, she might have imagined the pain. There are some people who insist that miracles are impossible while others are just as sure that they do occur. One writer has said, "If you have a materialistic slant and do not believe in miracles you will never see one, but if you believe in them you will see many."

That metaphysics is superior to psychotherapeutics in the treatment of mental disorders has been demonstrated many times. What Mary Austin designated as her "Sacred Middle" is the Superconscious recognized by the most eminent psychologists.

Doctor Seabury in his book *Help Yourself to Happiness* * says, "This inner hearing and inner perception is the way, the only way, that profound and permanent changes come to pass in case of neurosis. Nor in the fulfillment of work can a person's career ever reach his highest achievement save as he adds an element distilled from the vapors of his own spiritual unfoldment.—Such revelatory changes have been coming to men and women in the last few years in a way amazing to see. The depression burned some meaning into consciousness. We are at last beginning to see below

* Copyright, McGraw-Hill Book Co.

the objective plane of the materialist to the subjective values of life."

After Mary Austin's experience in Rome many people claimed that she had become a Catholic. This was true only in the sense that through the instruction of the Catholic Church in Rome she was able to strengthen her belief in and understanding of early Christian prayer which was akin to the primitive prayer of the Medicine Man which had already made such an impression on her.

In her book, *Can Prayer Be Answered?*,* which was written many years later and was the result of deep study and spiritual experience she says, "Prayer—it ties and unties, patterns and unravels; the most that we can do is to take it at the flow, going with it, leaning upon it.

"Indian prayer gesture consists in setting up in your inner self a motion carefully tuned and timed with the motion of the universe in the field in which you hope to be effective; the field of health or success, any chosen activity or dominance over any material complex.

"The use of the rosary or other objects is helpful in that it sets up rhythmic motion—Symbolic gesture, dress—smoke—Saint's figures, so evoked save time and effort in directing the motion of man's inner self in the evocation processes by which the answer to prayer is brought about—

"What I discovered first was that the value of rhythmic movements and noises, so much used by the

* Copyright, Farrar & Rinehart, Inc.

Indians, lay in the power to break the tension of immediate circumstances and hold their attention.

"Everyone lives more or less in a coil of immediate attention which must be shuffled off before the attention can be fixed on the creative principle which is designed to use as a basis of prayer.

"And no sooner had I read what those Christian Saints had left on the subject than I found myself back where I had begun with the Indians."

From Mary's experiences grew her book, *Christ in Italy*, in which she says, "It was by this means that I was able to dispense with much that the already branded held indispensable. Once the Friend was touched it stood me in place of great love, pictures, music, the traditional atmosphere.

"I climbed as high by it as any tourist by the spires of Milan. But once away from the wilderness I suffered a check in the ability of the average to read this commerce with the Friend beyond its appearance of eccentricity." *

This attitude of her compatriots is shown clearly in a conversation which I had recently with Mrs. McDuffie, one of the cultured group who knew her in Italy. According to her, "Mary Austin gave the feeling that she thought 'I like this, therefore it must be good.' Being a genius, she felt that she did not have to make the intellectual approach. There was always the absurd insincerity of thinking that she knew when she didn't."

Although society had its iron out to brand the Maverick, Mary Austin says, "Just precisely what I brought

* Quoted by permission of the Executors of the Estate of Mary Austin.

out of Italy—is leave and license to go on being a Maverick.”

And because she went on being a Maverick that sophisticated group who were inclined to believe that nothing was worth seeing or listening to, unless it came out of the age-old culture of Europe, found their imagination gripped by her power with words. Up till that time they knew that she had written two or three books but they considered her rather ordinary and uninteresting.

A Polish exile, Veynich, whose wife wrote the *Gadfly*, had bought an antique shop, a musty dirty old place but filled with rare treasures. He tore the place to pieces, found many ancient volumes, among other things some Medici playing cards.

The literary colony were fascinated by the rare collection and often congregated there. One night the American group, including Mary Austin, dined together and went on to the shop where they found an interesting international group sitting around informally. Voynich suggested that each one should tell a story. Doctor Harriss, an American woman physician who was present, told me of the dramatic impression Mary Austin made that night.

There were several contributions and then Mary related the story of the time when the stage was stopped in Red Rock Canyon on one of her trips to Mojave, and a man asked if there was someone on board who could pray. The story was told in a way that gripped and held that sophisticated group in rapt silence. When Mary came to the prayer, she rose and stood in their midst. She seemed inspired as she repeated, “Our Father which art in Heaven—” as they had never heard it

before. After she finished the group were silent. There were no more stories told that night.

Mary went on to London and visited with Herbert and Lou Hoover. Anne Martin was also a guest at the Hoovers'. Anne was an ardent feminist and was working with Emmeline Pankhurst at the time when they were annoying the police in order to get arrested and attract attention to their cause. Anne was a member of the Lyceum Club and had Mary elected to that organization. They went about a good deal together. Mary proved an entertaining dinner guest and Anne remembers her at the Hoover dinner parties where she wore yellow satin and amber beads and was quite the center of attention.

Mary realized that Anne had ability, both as a lecturer and writer, and she suggested that they go to some quiet spot in the country and work together. Anne was to act as an amanuensis, Mary telling the stories and talking over her work with her. Then each would spend the morning writing, meet for lunch, read what they had written, spend the afternoon tramping and planning for the next day's work.

Anne agreed and Mary went to Bramley in Surrey and arranged for living quarters. Anne joined her. She found that the rooms which Mary had taken were about a block apart in the homes of artisans. They were shabby and comfortless and, to Anne's mind, not even decent. To this unpleasant environment was added the odor from a tannery in the immediate neighborhood. Anne, to whom the food seemed inedible, complained that she had never lived under such conditions and saw no reason why she should do so now.

Mary said she had no right to object. That she, Mary, had lived under less desirable conditions and that the present ones were as good as she was accustomed to. She insisted that Anne should develop character by learning to disregard living conditions. As Anne expressed it, "Savage old Mary, trying to make me over!"

Something of the power to dominate others that Mary had acquired is shown by the fact that even though Anne was a leading suffragette and had the courage to have herself arrested for the cause, was the first woman in the United States to run for United States Senator and brought in a suffrage enrollment from Nevada only equaled by that of Jeannette Rankin from Montana, yet she found herself unable to stand up to Mary.

The denouement is amusing. Finally, in desperation, Anne wired Lady Hesketh, one of her English friends, inviting herself to visit her immediately. Lady Hesketh promptly came to her rescue. Anne Martin says she never felt such a sense of relief as she did when she took her departure on the train and realized that she was free from Mary.

However their friendship continued when they returned to London and they collaborated later in America. They wrote pamphlets for the suffrage campaign, spoke from the same platform and arranged the pageant of the National Woman's party at the Capitol in Washington where the western representatives of the suffrage party were received by the members of the Senate and House in 1916.

In spite of the fact that Mary speaks rather unkindly of Anne Martin in *Earth Horizon*, saying, "She had

very little capacity for work," yet no more sincere tribute appeared after her death than the one by Anne which was published in *The Nation*.

"Her feminism was active and creative. But even if she had never opened her lips for the cause her achievement as a naturalist and anthropologist, as an original and intuitive explorer into the depths of the subconscious—as a mystic—if you will—, as interpreter of the Indian, of the land of man in his environment, as a profound and versatile woman of letters undoubtedly places her in the first rank not as a woman but as a human being.

"Her life and work like that of Jane Addams and Madame Curie and countless lesser women who are going forth into the unknown and are holding their own in fields formerly monopolized by men, validate the rights of women the world over."

I met Anne Martin recently at the Women's City Club in San Francisco. We talked of Mary Austin and Anne repeated a few stanzas from the lovely poem, *Campo Santo at San Juan*.^{*} Mary composed it while they were driving together when Anne visited her in Santa Fé. In it Mary expressed her understanding of and sympathy with women.

.....

*A bow shot nearer the mesa's edge,
Pale huts that drink the sun.
Long after dark their walls give back warm tones,
The wine of light.
Five centuries and more these walls
Have been drawn out of dust by women's hands.*

^{*} Copyright by the Executors of the Estate of Mary Austin.

*They too have drunk the sun, are dusky with it,
Their white teeth give secret flashes and their eyes,
The very fibers of their blankets sparkle
Clear red and yellow like stained glass.*

*Sit here by the Cacique's house
And watch Lupita plastering a wall
With dust that was some mother's son,
Mixed with the rain that fell, how many times!
As women's tears.
This was their life;
A wind that rose and struggled with the dust
And stilled to dust again.*

.....

Anne Martin finished our visit together by saying, "Mary Austin was a lonely, disappointed woman with an empress complex. She thought she was so important! Once when she traveled east tourist, for lack of funds, she called herself Mrs. Graham. She said she did this so that people would not annoy her as they would if they knew she was the great Mary Austin!"

While in London, Mary met H. G. Wells, the Chestertons, saw Bernard Shaw and other literary celebrities at the Fabian Society, drove with Mr. Hoover to the home of Joseph Conrad who lived in a small, old-fashioned farmhouse. He was ill and unhappy. The royalties on his books were scarcely enough to provide a decent living for himself and Mrs. Conrad. He appreciated the fact that Mary had written him about his work. "I stand on the shore and make my cry into the dark," he said, "and only now and then a cry comes back to me."

Mary found that it was characteristic of all the English people whom she met that they seemed uninterested. "At least they were not interested and curious about me as I was about them," she says.

She returned to Carmel by way of New York where William Archer had asked her to produce her Indian play, *The Arrow Maker* at the New Theater.

The colony at Carmel had grown apace. It was not an imitation of its eastern predecessor, the Concord group—Alcott, Emerson and their contemporaries—but a spontaneous gathering of congenial spirits of quick wit and creative genius in surroundings of natural beauty, hallowed by the ever present memory that here Robert Louis Stevenson had found inspiration.

There is a picture in an old copy of the *Pacific Monthly* illustrating an article entitled *A Famous Fraternity of Artists*. It is taken against a background of Carmel pines. Mary Austin, her hair parted in the middle, dressed in a white shirtwaist and a dark, gored skirt which sweeps the ground, is the center of the group. Sturdy-looking, curly-haired Jimmy Hopper and lean, poetic-looking George Sterling are on either side.

Although Mary's dress is much the same as that in the picture taken at grandfather Birchim's, yet no one would recognize this poised, self-confident person as the one who makes only a shadowy impression in the background of the Birchim picture. The one is a picture of Mary-by-herself. The other a picture of I-Mary.

In an article published in the *American Mercury*, 1927, Mary gives a very vivid sketch of how her companions looked to her at the time that picture was taken:

"Sterling was as handsome as a Roman faun, shy,

restless, slim and stooping; giving the impression, though we were within a few months of each other as to years, of being entitled to the extenuations of youth.

"Besides Sterling there was a short man with the face of a Breton sailor and hair like one of Fra Angelico's angels, who turned out to be Jimmy Hopper."

In the same magazine is a picture of somber-eyed, dark-haired Anna Strunksey, the Russian Jewess who was collaborating with Jack London on the Kempton-Wace letters, a scientific and sentimental analysis and discussion of love between man and woman, the brain child of the affinity between Jack London and the woman in whom he felt for awhile he had found his soul-mate.

It is interesting to note how the early life of Jack London paralleled that of Mary Austin in character-forming essentials. They were both unwanted children and had been deprived of the love which is the natural environment of childhood. The result was a baffling mixture of egotism and self-confidence combined with inarticulate shyness and an exaggerated inferiority complex.

Other artists and writers had joined the colony: Harry Leon Wilson, Freda Baknoff, Charles Rollo Peters, Arnold Genthe, Nora May French whom Mary Austin mentions in *Earth Horizon* as the only other woman of the circle whose gifts approached Sterling's or London's. Sinclair Lewis, just out of college, was acting as secretary to Grace MacGowen Cook, and sharing a shack with William Rose Benét.

They all recognized George Sterling, whose *Testimony of the Suns* had caused him to be hailed as a great poet, as their leader. Robinson Jeffers, the great modern

poet who lives and writes in the home, Tor House, which he built on the rugged Carmel coast, gives a graphic description in the *San Francisco Review*, of how he found the Sterling Shrine.

"One afternoon we happened on a group of trees, circular about a stone fireplace that looked like an altar, and each of the tall trunks hung with a skull, a cow's or a horse's, high up under the gloom of the boughs. It looked to us like the last of the sacred groves, deserted at last. We wanted to ask about the place; we knew none here but finally the house agent or the grocer told us it had been Sterling's place. Eleven years later, reading his poem of the Bird's nest in the skull, I recognized our sacred grove of long ago."

Jeffers, in a kind of nostalgia for those early days of the Literary Colony of Carmel wrote:

*I did not meet him in the gleaming years
That made the great friendships and the early fame,
The carnival time when wine was as common as tears
The fabulous dawn was darkened before I came.
The Carmel woods because he had wandered there
Were yet misted with gold when he returned.
The iron season had come, the iron was gray in his hair,
Yet in his heart the child and the song burned.—
The Carmel woods are full of music to remember
And years of a sad music; and mine to go on,—**

* S. S. Alberts—*A Bibliography of Robinson Jeffers.*

CHAPTER XX

THERE ARE MANY PICTURESQUE STORIES recorded of those early days in Carmel. They tell of an ideal communal life, free from avarice or distinctions of class. Author and grocer, artist and druggist, poet and plumber all worked and played together. The only requirement was that they should enjoy what they were doing.

The milk shrines are a typical example of the easy-going life. They were neighborhood boxes, built like a shrine, in which space was partitioned off for the milk bottles of the various neighbors. People would leave twelve cents or a milk card at night and in the morning they invariably found that the cow had made the rounds and collected the amount due.

The town Bulletin Board which was the center of barter and exchange for years, was an important part of community life. A typical notation on the board was:

"Lost—Two loaves of bread—Will finder please return to *** at *** If eaten, please bring twenty-five cents."

A pad of paper and a pencil were attached to the board with the instructions, "Leave your orders for wood here." Many an order was filled without the wood courier ever meeting his patron. Often there would be a shoe tacked up on the board, trustfully and hopefully waiting for its mate.

The grocer's bulletin board was often brought into

use for community purposes. After the Forest Theater was opened the following appeal appeared, "One pair brown trunks and one assassin's spear missing. Please return to Forest Theater. If no one is around put them under the loose plank over orchestra pit.—Sardines packed in genuine olive oil—20 cts. a can."

That seriousness was spiced with gaiety and that great poets and artists and writers were not above composing doggerel at times is shown by the following verses which resulted from the collaboration of many writers, since famous. They were sung at the get-together meetings at the Sterling Shrine. The original manuscript, in the spidery handwriting of George Sterling is one of the many treasures in the collection of Albert Bender, noted patron of art and letters.

THE ABALONE SONG

*Oh! Some folks boast of quail on toast
Because they think it's tony;
But I'm content to owe my rent
And live on abalone.*

*Oh! Mission Point's a friendly joint;
Where every crab's a crony;
And true and kind you'll ever find
The clinging abalone.*

*On Carmel bay, the people say,
We feed the lazzaroni
On Boston beans and fresh sardines
And toothsome abalone.*

*Some live on hope, and some on dope,
And some on alimony;
But my tom cat, he lives on fat
And tender abalone.*

*Oh! Some drink rain and some champagne,
Or brandy by the pony;
But I will try a little rye
With a dash of abalone.*

*Oh! Some like jam, and some like ham,
And some like macaroni;
But bring me in a pail of gin
And a tub of abalone.*

*He hides in caves beneath the waves—
His ancient patrimony;
And so 'tis shown that faith alone
Reveals the abalone.*

*The more we take the more they make
In deep sea matrimony;
Race suicide cannot abide
The fertile abalone.*

*I telegraph my better half
By Morse or by Marconi;
But if the need arise for speed
I send an abalone.*

*Oh! Some think that the Lord is fat,
And some think he is bony;
But as for me I think that He
Is like an abalone.*

The painter and writer folk all worked industriously in the morning but when the early afternoon mail arrived they congregated for its distribution and then wandered off by piney trails or white-sand beaches, to meet again at impromptu evening gatherings.

"There was beauty and strangeness to the life at Carmel," Mary writes, "beauty of a Greek quality but not too Greek; green fires and billows tremulous with light; not wanting the indispensable touch of grief, strangeness of bearded men from Tassagara with bear meat and wild honey to sell; great teams from Sur going by on the highroad with a sound of bells, and shadowy recesses within the wood, white with the droppings of night-haunting birds. But I think that the memorable and now vanished charm of Carmel lay in the reality of the simplicity achieved, a simplicity factually disposed to the quest of food and fuel and housing, as it can never be in any quarter of city life. And very much more than we at the time realized, it derived from George Sterling between whom and the environment there was a perfection of suitability that mediated, even for the clumsiest, the coveted levels of simplicity." *

Mary continued to write. There was considerable trouble with editors and publishers. She discussed the situation with Jack London. They agreed that their best work did not appeal to the public. Jack said, "Those who sit alone must sit alone."

Mary Austin's *A Woman of Genius* was dropped after four months by the first publishers because the wife of one of the members of the firm said it was immoral. Later Mary resold it. When *Lost Borders* was first offered to the public there was considerable discus-

* *Earth Horizon*, Copyright, Houghton Mifflin Co.

sion in the Carmel Public Library as to whether the book should be allowed to circulate.

It seems incredible now that such a book as *A Woman of Genius* could ever have been considered immoral. Through the efforts of Margaret Sanger and women associated with her the need of an understanding approach to the subject of birth control is recognized and discussed with scientific approval.

But such subjects were taboo at the time *A Woman of Genius* was published. A conversation between mother and daughter which appears in the book shows the restraint exercised in discussing such intimate relations.

"'Olive,' she began timidly at last, 'aren't you ever going to have any more children?'

"'Oh, I hope so, Mother. I haven't been very strong, you know, since the first one. We didn't think it advisable.'

"'Well, if you can manage it that way—' There was a trace in her tone of the woman who hadn't been able to manage. I wished to reassure her.

"'When I was in the hospital the Doctor told me—' I could see the deep flush rising over her face and neck; there were some things which her generation had never faced.

"'I used to think those things weren't right, Olive, but I don't know. Sometimes I think it isn't right either, to bring them into the world when there is no welcome for them.' She struggled with the admission."

Then, too, the book raises a question which seems strangely old-fashioned now. Should a woman in whom the flame of genius burns consider herself so thoroughly married to her husband's business, his locale, his de-

sires, that she must reject any opportunity that offers to feed the flame?

Looking back on Carmel Mary shows a tendency to idealize the life there. Perhaps the gift was never given her to see herself as others saw her.

George Sterling, Jack London, Mary Austin, Nora May French are gone but I talked with Jimmy Hopper recently about those early Carmel days. He remembers Mary as having a plain, tragic, brooding face. She could be very charming and her eyes would light up when she was interested enough to forget herself.

She seemed immersed in her writing. She was working on *Lost Borders* and wrote *Outland*; symbolic of the Carmel group. They wanted to like her because they admired her work but they resented her apparent desire to be the center of the group and considered her a terrible megalomaniac. She was so persistent about putting on her play, *The Arrowmaker*, in the Forest Theater that they called her Sitting Bull. She got into a bitter fight with George Sterling after she came back from Italy.

She was always working up things for effect. She built up a picture of herself as a horse-woman but could not ride. One day there was a fire back of Pine Inn. Mary dressed cow-girl fashion, with her hair down her back, got a horse from the livery stable and rode to the fire, about four blocks away.

She was a good story-teller and often told her stories to the group before she wrote them but she was tormented with a desire for success and always doing things that she thought would bring her fame.

She had a mystic side; believed in little gods. The fakey side of her was laughed at by the group.

George Sterling got tired of seeing her take down

her hair. Once he took off her shoes and said if she wanted to undress she might as well go the whole way.

She would go about the woods, waving her arms and gesticulating. Jimmy Hopper believes Mary felt she was missing something. That explained her pretense and play-acting. She was intelligent enough to know there should be something more than she had.

She was always pretending love affairs. She backed Jimmy Hopper into a corner and declared:

"We must all be born. We must all die. We must all have one grand passion!"

The men fought shy of her. Lincoln Steffens ran away to Mexico, scared of her advances. When Jimmy Hopper told me this I recalled the young Mary Hunter in Bakersfield, trying to make herself attractive to the youths who avoided her. At any rate Jimmy Hopper and I agreed that Mary was struggling with uncertainty and humility and hungry for admiration and affection.

Meanwhile townspeople outside the artists' colony poked fun at the "high-brows" in it. They laughed about "The wise Mary and the frisky Jimmy."

In her autobiography Mary says, "Much that got into the press about Carmel had no more fidelity to the fact than an item reported in a recent visitor's book to the effect that my house at Carmel had a cow's tail for a bell pull. The truth is that my bell pull was a strand of ancient Spanish hair rope, at the other end of which had hung a bell that the rope had once supported around the neck of the bell camel that had come with the herd imported by Jefferson Davis for domestication in the American desert. The bell was hand made of bronze and bore an inscription in Arabic to keep off the evil eye."

Although the encroachment of modern living and transportation has disturbed the original simplicity of beautiful Carmel by the Sea, yet the founders of that artistic colony left a heritage which the writers and artists have guarded well. They bonded the village and bought the sand dunes along the shore lines so amusement concessions could never mar their beauty. They drafted a zoning ordinance.

When the new highway was contemplated, running south from the Big Sur Basin, made famous by Robinson Jeffers in his *Woman of Point Sur*, on past San Simeon with its treasure-filled castle built by William Randolph Hearst, the inhabitants of Carmel were dismayed at the prospect of a main highway roaring through beautiful Carmel by the Sea.

To protest the routing of a state highway through the village would have been a useless gesture, but the inheritors of Carmel tradition sat tight and kept their fingers crossed. Instead of the usual frantic efforts put forth by citizens of a community to route the highway through their main street, there was an impervious indifference to the promised boom in real estate values and corner-lot gas station possibilities.

Only a few of the merchants failed to join in the general rejoicing when, lacking the customary urgent invitation, the highway skirted the eastern edge of the town.

Although automobile traffic is heavy on Ocean Avenue, which taps the highway and runs down to the sea, yet one has only to walk a short distance from the main street to find himself on paths that border crooked, unpaved roads. Once in awhile there is a sidewalk in front of the property of someone who moved in and tried to set

an example but the example has never been followed.

Walking along the sandy paths one chances on low shingle cottages with plummy pines in the garden. There are no rare plants, but flowers that grow sturdily and colorfully and do not resent being neglected for a day or two when the palette or typewriter demands the owner's attention. One sees geraniums, sweet Williams, fuschias, genestra, marguerites, foxglove under the deodars, and always nasturtiums clinging to some rocky niche in wall or terrace.

The names of the houses are intriguing: White Heather, Wish-Ton-Wish, The Secret Door. There is one I can never pass without lingering: The Whin Bush. A flagged path bordered by pine and fir and genestra leads on through ferns and fuschias to a hidden house. I would not be surprised to see Pan go piping up that path some day. Wild parsley, like ladies' lace runs riot in uncultivated spots and there are fairy lanterns in the woods in spring and along the cliffs by the sea grow yellow and blue lupine, Indian paint brush and California poppies.

So it is that Carmel remains a haven for artists and writers and craftsmen and those who love the pines and the sea and the simple life, more than the so-called prosperity that the highway might bring.

When progress, some years ago, threatened to boost Carmel into its van, the writers came out of their seclusion and elected an Art Ticket to the Board of Trustees. They adopted the slogan: Keep Carmel Off the Map! We don't want Booster's Clubs, Get Together organizations or Chambers of Commerce. One of the candidates was Perry Newberry, artist, writer and journalist. He adopted the following platform:

"Believing that what 9,999 towns out of 10,000 towns want is just what Carmel shouldn't have, I am a candidate for trustee on the platform, DON'T BOOST!

"I am making a spiritual campaign to win by asking those who disagree with me to vote against me."

Mr. Newberry tacked his poster on the town bulletin board.

It Read: "Don't vote for Perry Newberry

If you hope to see Carmel become a city.

If you want its growth boosted.

If you desire its commercial success.

If street lamps on its corners mean happiness to you.

If concrete street pavements represent your civic ambitions.

If you have less regard for the unique character of Carmel than for the opportunity of money making.

If you think that a glass factory is of greater value than a sand dune, or a millionaire than an artist, or a mansion than a little brown cottage.

If you truly want Carmel to become a boosting, hustling, wide-awake, lively metropolis

Don't vote for Perry Newberry!"

He was elected.

Evidence that the spirit of its founders still exists is shown by the fact that Herbert Herron, poet, Shakespearean scholar and playwright was elected mayor, April 13, 1938, on a platform, KEEP CARMEL AS IT IS.

But it requires eternal vigilance. A recent article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* under the title, *How an Art Colony Lives*, reads: "Legend says that two professions founded Carmel. Artists and writers. Jack Lon-

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don, Mary Austin, Jimmie Hopper, Maynard Dixon, Lincoln Steffens, Robinson Jeffers—made it famous. Today a handful of the veteran vanguard battles to keep its bypaths unpaved, its black pines unsullied by yellow street lights. Summer visitors (ten times normal population) make it a tourist town for two months.—The other ten months, news is made by rejection slips and ‘ten cent a word’ publisher’s checks.

“Those are the months when the inhabitants of Carmel come into their own.”

It is said there isn’t a tired business man in Carmel. They have learned not to let business interfere with pleasure. It is all right to do some business every day but it is considered unseemly to set the accumulation of wealth as the goal.

Here, in the Forest Theater where Mary Austin’s play *The Arrowmaker* was produced with Mary playing the role of the Medicine Woman, playwrights are still trying out their work as Sidney Howard did his first play, before a critical but sympathetic audience.

I visited Carmel recently and walked from the beach up Ocean Boulevard to the library, turning north past it to follow the road that leads to the house and studio that Mary Austin built. It is at the end of a dirt road marked at the beginning, as so many roads in Carmel are, by the sign: NOT A THROUGH STREET. The studio is at the bottom of a shallow arroyo or wash—a quiet place where the scent of the sea and the pines mingle. It was June, 1938. Returning to San Francisco I passed a car on the way from Carmel to Monterey. It had an Illinois license plate. My thoughts flew back to the little girl, born Mary Hunter in Illinois, who lived to be known as *The Star of Carmel*.

CHAPTER XXI

WHEN THE PANAMA PACIFIC EXPOSITION in San Francisco was opened to celebrate the completion of the Panama Canal, the committee in charge found that the eastern press was failing to give deserved publicity to the exquisitely beautiful achievement of the city by the Golden Gate.

The exposition suffered from lack of advertising and for lack of foreign exhibits due to the war in Europe and the inability of many countries to be represented for that reason. After two prominent citizens were sent East and failed to procure the interest of editors in allowing the necessary space, Mary Austin was asked to tackle the problem. Mary knew that the exposition was a thing of artistic beauty and she was determined to convince the editors that publicity concerning it would be of general interest.

After Mary Austin's death, Carey Williams wrote, in regard to the attitude of the eastern critics toward her work: "She had bludgeoned them into according her the reputation she enjoyed. During the last years of her life, in fact, she had them thoroughly cowed. In terror of her somewhat formidable personality, they wrote of her as she wanted them to write."

Perhaps she exercised that "formidable personality" with the editors in behalf of the exposition. At any rate she was successful, even with a Hearst publication whose publicity men said when she approached them on the subject, "Now, you know, Mrs. Austin, we don't want

any of that stuff. All we are interested in is sex and slush."

"Well," Mary replied, "We are going to have a lot of nude statuary!" She made a note that the Hearst publication took six pages of publicity as a result!

When it became increasingly evident that America was in danger of being forced into participation in the European war, Mary returned to California and became an active worker in the cause of peace. The *San Francisco Examiner*, September 20, 1917, carries a full-page announcement of a meeting for peace to be held in Golden Gate Park. The picture in the center of the page is captioned: "Bandstand at Golden Gate Park where meeting for peace will take place today. The upper portraits are of Mayor James Rolph, Jr., who will be chairman of the day, and Mary Austin, the famous novelist, who will make an address." The address was entitled, War and Women.

It happened that Helen Gunn, who as a little girl had known Mary in Independence, was in the audience with her mother and one or two others from Inyo County. Helen had always been fond of Mary and wanted to meet her, but the others protested that Mary did not care to meet them. Helen was not convinced and she rushed up to Mary and put her hands up to be hugged and kissed. Mary kissed her and gave every evidence of being glad to see her. She invited the party to have lunch with her at the Palace Hotel and Helen remembers how they powdered their noses, washed their hands and cleaned their fingernails with a toothpick before meeting her. To their surprise, Mary was charming to them, which only goes to show that when people approached Mary with the feeling that

she didn't want to see them, she didn't. She was hungry for spontaneous, whole-hearted affection.

When the United States entered the World War Mary Austin went to New York and joined forces with other women who were raising money for war purposes. She obtained a substantial sum by telling fortunes with cards at which, with an uncanny understanding of people and an undoubted clairvoyant gift, she gained quite a reputation as a seer.

She became associated with women who were leaders in the suffrage movement and was urged to take an active part. But because she was supposed to use the standardized arguments she found that talking from the suffrage platform bored her. Anne Martin was there. Mary met Ida Tarbell, Minnie Maddern Fiske and others who had formed a stage women's division of suffrage.

She met influential men and formed opinions about them. She often saw Herbert Hoover as he went back and forth to Washington in the interests of the Food Administration. He had been kind to her and she wanted to help him by organizing the women to that end. She "saw him fall into errors that have been the source of much misunderstanding between him and his public. . . . He had no notion of what publicity means. It meant to him whatever he thought it meant; advertising, formulas, inchoate talks. He had a great many University people about him; he thought it meant whatever they meant; he had no idea of the pull of organized thought, the solid drawing power of it." *

She had come in contact with Theodore Roosevelt through the Indian Bureau and her impression of him

* *Earth Horizon*, Copyright, Houghton Mifflin Co.

was that, "He had a solid and plangent relation to the public mind; he knew what was going on in it. . . ."

During the War Mary was in touch with the added impetus given to the suffrage movement by the young women who went out after War honors. She found that there were women like Anna Howard Shaw, a Doctor of Medicine and a Doctor of Divinity, as well as a President of the National American Women's Suffrage Association, who kept to the moral restrictions imposed by their forefathers. There were younger women in the movement who were not inhibited by moral attitudes.

"Women in general understood," she concluded, "that chastity was no longer at the head of the list of desirable behaviors for women; that love was to be made cheap; that it was to be taken where found. It was the price of war; it was to come with the purchase of political freedom."

The suffrage movement was the basis for Mary Austin's book, *The Young Woman Citizen*.^{*} In it she voiced her impatience with people, especially writers, who approached their work in a slipshod manner. She wrote, "Clear, high thinking runs to clean precise words just as good steel takes a fine edge. You yourself do not respect your thought very much, nor can you expect the world to respect it, if you send it out clothed in the scraps and rags of slang and slovenly phrases."

Not comprehending the untiring and meticulous application that underlay Mary Austin's success in letters, authors resented this attitude. A woman who was part of the literary group in New York at that time has since

* Copyright by The Woman's Press.

told me that although everyone appreciated how brilliant she was, her caustic tongue made many enemies for her.

It is not surprising that the younger literary group were more annoyed than admonished by Mary's critical attitude towards their work and that she came to be known among them as God's mother-in-law!

Mary went on with her work, writing novels, articles, Indian plays, Indian poetry. She divided her time between New York and Carmel, stopping off in New Mexico to familiarize herself with the Pueblo Indians.

She met and mingled with authors: William Dean Howells, William Allen White, Vachel Lindsay, Frank Harris, Amy Lowell, Robert Frost. She lived on Riverside Drive and later at the Washington Irving House, the National Arts Club, and No. 10 Barrow Street.

She was indefatigable in her search for new experiences, new material. She rented rooms near the elevated, representing herself as a typist. She worked at various kinds of employment with people who represented the underlying strata of the business world. She made artificial flowers, worked in a hair shop, went about under the guise of a newspaper reporter. She was endeavoring to become acquainted with city dwellers outside what she considered a narrowly circumscribed circle in which the people whom she met socially moved. She wanted to find heroes and heroines among the city dwellers for novels that she would write. But the inoculation did not take. She was out of her milieu.

Mary was never at home in New York. She never had the feeling of belonging. She was essentially a country woman. She needed a home, a roof tree, a place where she could put down her roots. I heard from friends who

were staying at the National Arts Club that she came in alone to her meals. Although people seemed friendly with her, they were never familiar, as though the fact of her being there or not being there was a matter of indifference to them.

Mary never failed to devote her mornings to her work. *The Ford*, *The Trail Book*, 26 *Jayne Street*, were written during this interval. Although Mary considered the latter the best novel she had written up till that time, yet it failed of popular approval and financial success. Mary felt the exposé she made of parlor radicals was ten or fifteen years ahead of the times and where the reviewers did not miss the point completely, they were peevish about it.

No one believed in her Indian poetry. *The Atlantic Monthly* said they could not see any reason for it. *The Century* agreed to print it if she would acknowledge that she had made it up herself. Amy Lowell, who was then experimenting in the Indian poetry herself, doubted its origin. She had written what she supposed was a love poem, after witnessing one of the Pueblo dances. It turned out that the poem celebrated the fertility rite. Amy was considerably upset over it.

When Mary met Robert Frost she found that he came nearer to understanding the Indian rhythm than anyone to whom she had talked about it. But in those days the literary Brahmins wondered whether Frost was really a poet. Mary was advised not to take his opinion too seriously, therefore.

Disappointed in her novel, Mary turned again, however, to the background of her earlier successes—the Indian and the desert, as interpreted in *The American Rhythm*.

Near the close of the War Mary found herself very tired. Her brother Jim had died and George, who had graduated in medicine, was in a base hospital in Tours. Mary returned to California to find the sisters-in-law quarreling with each other and unfriendly to her. Susanna Hunter, when she died, had left all the family heirlooms to Jim with the understanding that they should be passed on to Mary when he died.

Mary attempted to gain possession of them but, although quarreling among themselves over the things that meant so little to them and so much to Mary, they united in refusing to let her even copy the letters written by her father and mother to each other during the war and kept the daguerreotypes that were so closely associated with memories of the old home on Plum Street in Carlinville, Illinois.

They both opposed Mary's plan to take her niece, Mary Hunter, Jim's child by his first wife, to educate her and make a home for her. The stepmother had refused to allow little Mary to visit her aunt, giving as her reason that she did not wish to have her under the influence of a woman who was so queer! But in spite of opposition Mary took young Mary Hunter with her to Carmel, afterwards sending her East to school. She assuaged somewhat the heart hunger that Ruth, who had died in a sanitarium at the age of twenty-two, had never been able to satisfy.

Wallace Austin, after a few ineffectual attempts to get into something around the bay had returned to Inyo. It seemed to Mary he had gone even deeper into its desolation at Death Valley.

That she had hoped all along that her husband might eventually break away from Inyo and come to her is

shown in a letter written from the Pine Inn at Carmel in 1907.

"Mr. Austin is trying to find a suitable location in one of the small towns around the bay," she wrote, "but has not settled on anything yet. I shall build a small house here to keep my things in, for I am going abroad next winter for a few months. I keep fairly well and work hard—"

In *Earth Horizon* Mary Austin says, "When I came back from Europe I knew that I could never take it up again. I had said to my husband when I left: 'When you can make a place for me, a background where I can live with reasonable comfort and rationality, I will join you again.' But he never contrived. After a year of somewhat aimless crawling, he reverted to the desert—"

Mary says of the closing chapter of their married life, "He was never able to make of our married life a Thing, a planned, progressive arrangement. In the midst of an agreed upon activity, suddenly I would be thrown on my own resources, scrabbling for means, dislocated in my professional career. I was driven, in order to meet the uncertainties of professional life and my too easily shaken constitution, to live as I could live best, apart from him.

"Hopeless at last of making a more satisfactory arrangement, the proposal for a divorce came from me. I was grieved to find how grieved he was, but I thought that there was still a chance that if he were free he might make a more satisfactory marriage. The expectation was never fulfilled.—We remained friends but we were neither of us very happy; I am stricken still to recall the impulses which held us together and the lack of co-ordination which drove us apart."

Of the possibility of her own marriage Mary said, "I came too late into the social scheme to have cared for love without responsibility. And of the men who so early accepted love without obligation, too many had rejected other things along with it, truth, integrity, intention, the shared sacrifice. Sometimes I think if I had had the wit to look for a Jew for a partner, I might have found both love and opportunity. Only the Jews are warm enough to tolerate art as a share-holder. But I didn't know that at the time.

"On the whole, what I regret is not the lack of a satisfying marriage, but the loss out of my life of the traditional protection, the certification of ladyhood. I have never been taken care of; and considering what that has meant to women in general, I feel a loss in the quality of charm and graciousness which I am unable to rationalize. The experience of being competent to myself has been immensely worth while to me. It gives clarity and poise."

Perhaps Mary rationalized a bit when she said what she missed most was the traditional protection of marriage and the certification of ladyhood. As a young girl when her father died and her mother was left a widow she had been impressed by the tragedy of a woman left without that protection. But she had undoubtedly been more impressed by the difficulties which women faced, morally and economically, when they were forced to make their way in a man's world. Her mother's experience and her own unhappy marriage were motivating causes for her espousal of the suffrage campaign. Although she was not always in accord with the methods used by the organization yet, as Carey Williams said of her, "—Nor did she ever abandon the dowdy house-

wives of her generation; on the contrary she fought their battles on every front. Her witty and sensible lectures, once considered incendiary feminism, represented her effort to lift the weight of apathy from the mind of the American housewife; in other words to goad the 'Titanness to the travail of thought."

To a woman of Mary's temperament, it seems to me, the most essential thing for lasting happiness in marriage was co-ordination, the lack of which she says drove them apart. Lacking an absorbing love and the realization of her hopes and ambition for her child, she might still have found happiness in her marriage if she could have established a definite pattern, a rhythm.

In the introduction to *Earth Horizon* Mary relates how the pattern of her life was set for her in her youth. Although those with whom she became most closely associated in working out the pattern did not seem to comprehend its importance to her, yet she must go on, with them if possible, but failing in that, without them to its fulfillment. And she did go on until she was able to say, "The totality of my experience is that I have been faithful to the pattern, and it has not disappointed me."

CHAPTER XXII

THE MANY STOP-OVERS IN SANTA FÉ AND the short excursions which Mary had made into the desert of New Mexico acted as a magnet which continually enticed her to return. Not only did the country lure her, but the people whom she met there. They were artists and writers who appreciated the beauty of the country and chose to live simply in a way that satisfied her ideal of life.

There seems something prophetic in the title of the book for which she went to Santa Fé to collect material, *The Land of Journey's Ending*, for it was to prove The Land of Journey's Ending for Mary.

Gerald Cassidy, the artist, and Inez Cassidy, the poet, accompanied Mary on her quest, helping her to gather up the feel, the sights, sounds and smells of that fantastic, colorful country that lies between the Colorado and the Rio Grande. She found them delightful companions, just as moved by the beauty of the country as she was and just as well fitted as she to express that beauty. They were very different from the people whom she had met in New York where she says, "The thing I suffered from most in New York was boredom. The people I met there were seldom interested in the things that interested me."

Much of what they saw on that trip went into *The Land of Journey's Ending*.

It is interesting to know what an ordinary reader, uninfluenced by one's own opinion or that of the critics,

has discovered in a book by a favorite author. In a library copy of *The Land of Journey's Ending* I found the following passages marked. That is, of course, a practice frowned upon, and rightly, but I felt as if I had met a very congenial person who enjoyed, as thoroughly as I do, Mary Austin's remarkable power of opening our eyes to the natural beauties to which we are often indifferent. It was as though we had read the book aloud together and lingered over the word pictures, rereading them to enjoy their full savor.

"We saw the corn dance at Zamez, the silver and turquoise and painted bodies and head dresses as they came out of the kiva."

"All down the Acequia Madre the farmers tending the water gates would take it up and pass the cry like napiti stags ringing their silver peals; 'Spring is here—Spring is here.'"

(Recalling the cottonwood trees.) "I remember over Galisteo Way where the walls of the houses are all rosy from the rosy earth, one that cast a spell on me, burning solitary in the clear yellow of every perfect leaf, in the hollow of the turquoise sky."

"—About corn planting time, red furry tips of leaves like a mouse's ear."

"—yellow poppies fluttering their cups an inch or two from the powdery earth, whole hill slope streaked along the stream lines with nearly stemless pale gold cruciferae. Later two or three varieties of yucca and agave send up tall banners of whitish bloom in companies like marching men.—"

Later Mary was asked by the Carnegie Americanization Foundation to make a survey of the population of Taos County, New Mexico. Mabel Dodge Luhan and Tony Luhan, the Indian whom she married, were living in Taos. Mary, who had learned so much from the Indians, was able to understand the peace and security that Mabel had achieved in that marriage.

Mabel and Tony and Gus Baumann, the artist who imprisons the gold of autumn cottonwoods and the filmy or crashing beauty of desert plants like one inspired, went with her on the survey. They traveled by wagon and Tony drove. They combined a study of the Spanish culture with the gathering of statistics and enjoyed the trip tremendously.

But Mary contracted an endemic intestinal disorder that taxed her never robust health. She returned to New York and consulted a physician. When she was too ill to work on *The Land of Journey's Ending* she rested herself by organizing the material for *The American Rhythm*, which was to include all the Indian poems she had written.

In 1922 Mary went to England where she was invited to lecture before the summer school of the Fabian Society. Following her first visit Mary had said that it seemed characteristic of all the English people she met that they were uninterested. At least they were not as curious about her as she was about them.

But on her second visit Mary found, as an old English serving woman once said to me in commenting on the attitude of the English toward Americans, "In England it takes a lot of knowing!" When Mary first visited

England she was a young author the excellence of whose work had attracted attention but whose quality of endurance had not been tested. Time had proven her stability and she was received with respect and enthusiasm.

"What woman in England can compare with her?" H. G. Wells questioned.

Bernard Shaw spent two weeks with the Fabian Society while she was there. Mary found him interested and friendly. "He talked and let himself go with me in a way that was extremely gratifying," she reveals in *Earth Horizon*.

She discussed her method of prayer with May Sinclair and found that although they did not agree on books, they did agree about spiritual matters and had found the same satisfying contact with the Friend of the Soul of Man.

She met Beatrice and Sidney Webb, Marie Corelli, Rebecca West and found herself en rapport with authors and editors. She visited the Conrads a second time. Sinclair Lewis, whom she had known in New York, went with her, on her invitation, to tea with Bernard Shaw.

Soon after her London triumphs, Mary Austin returned to the University of California to lecture on *The American Rhythm*. She had lectured on the same subject before the Fabian Society and Bernard Shaw had said it was the most interesting thing out of America that he had heard. He urged Mary to publish a book on the subject.

Although I had kept in touch with Mary through her writings and the contacts of mutual acquaintances I had not seen her since the Inyo County days. When I attended her lecture I was amazed to see how changed

she was. Instead of the struggling, harassed, reticent women I had known, I saw one sure of herself, of her work, electrified by success.

She spoke on her study of the Indians, their poetry, their prayer rituals, their dances; a study which she said began before the ink on her diploma was dry. She said the effect of this study, the only intellectual outlet she had had during eighteen years in the desert mountain country, on her mind and work was probably more extensive than she was able to reckon.

She stated what she afterwards wrote in the introduction to *The American Rhythm*,* "I have naturally a mimetic temperament that draws me toward the understanding of life by living it. If I wished to know what went into the patterns of the basket makers I gathered willows in the moon of white butterflies and fern stems when these were ripest. I soaked the fibers in running water turning them as the light turned, and did my ineffectual best to sit on the ground with an obsidian blade, holding the extra fibers between my toes. I made singing medicine as I was taught, and surprised the Friend of the Soul of Man between the rattles and the drums.—So when I say I am not, have never been or offered myself, as an authority in things Amerindian, I do not wish to have it understood that I may not, at times, have succeeded in being an Indian."

I am sure no one in that interested audience realized as I did, the truth of that statement. I recalled the Birchim ranch and how Will Birchim chanted the song of the Indian who poured out his soul to the object of his love until he died of grief and exhaustion, and how Mary entered into the agony of the young Indian so

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completely that she was overcome and unconscious from the experience.

I began to realize how closely the quest of Mary-by-herself toward the consummation in I-Mary was allied to the quest of the Dawn Man whose ego gave him no rest. The sex urge and the hunger urge, despite Freud to the contrary, were incidental. The realization of himself in relation to the Allness became the absorbing passion of his life. "He beat his breast over it— If he danced the I song in his loneliness, it was to call to himself that other by which he is made more completely one in becoming not himself only."

It took courage to say to that audience, largely made up of University people, "Its total effect was to convince me, as I think everyone does become convinced who lives sincerely among the Indians, that the earliest suffusing flush of human consciousness under a sense of its relation to the Allness is immensely more important to our social solutions than our far derived culture of the universities has permitted us to realize."

When Mary read some of the poems that afterwards were published in the book one knew that they were not literal translations but an interpretation of the feeling that prompted the poem. She had absorbed the truth of what Kern River Jim had told her, "You see Piuty man singin' some time, an' crying when he sing. It ain't what he singin' make him cry— It's what he thinkin' about when he sing make him cry."

When I saw Helen Hayes portray the character of Queen Victoria in the play, *Victoria Regina*, I was constantly reminded of Mary Austin. She was the same type. On the platform that day she was a middle-aged,

rather dumpy, homely woman. Her still beautiful, heavy hair was piled high on her head and caught with a Spanish comb. She was well dressed, but not by any stretch of the imagination smart or even stylish. But there was about her a strength, a commanding dignity, which one could believe might border on arrogance at times. One felt that she might so easily have been commonplace but by virtue of innate qualities she was a queenly woman.

When the lecture was over I went forward to meet Mary with much the same feeling that Helen Gunn must have had in Golden Gate Park, the day of the meeting in the interests of Peace. I was greeted in the same cordial fashion. There was no doubt in my mind that Mary was glad to see me.

She came to dinner that night and I invited a group of writers in to meet her. She told me that before she left New York she had contracted with a well-known magazine for three Indian stories to be delivered to them in the fall.

Knowing that she was not strong and that all her time during the summer would be given to this lecture tour, I asked her when she was going to find time to write those stories. I thought it might be helpful to the writers in the group if she gave us some idea of her methods of work.

"O, they will write themselves," she answered.

Then she told us that before leaving New York she went into the cathedral on Fifth Avenue as was her custom every day about twilight, and using a rosary, she instructed her sub-conscious mind in regard to the work to be accomplished; the kind of stories she wished to write, the date when the material should be ready. She concentrated on the matter from fifteen to thirty min-

utes. This routine was repeated for several days and then she started on her lecture tour and forgot all about it.

Occasionally, she said, her sub-conscious mind would ask for a little more detail on some given point. She would go to the library or some other source, look up the desired information and put the matter out of her mind again.

"When I return to New York," she said, "those stories will be ready. All I will have to do will be to sit down to the typewriter and take them as they come."

She claimed that she had not only found that this studied action of the spirit in transaction with the creative attitude had solved the problem for her but that she had been able to help many writers to escape the drudgery of their craft in this way. She mentioned Fannie Hurst as one who had written with great laboriousness until she had helped her to use her sub-conscious in her work.

It was evident to me by the attitude of the group and their remarks afterwards that they were rather bored with her sure-fire writing methods and her account of her London triumphs. It seemed a bit silly to them to have her call Bernard Shaw Barney, and to tell how he had danced with her.

They could not understand her pleasure in recalling how Sinclair Lewis hailed her with, "Hello, Mary, what in hell are you doing here?" when she ran into him unexpectedly in Canterbury on a visit to the Conrads.

They did not realize what it had meant to her on her return to New York to have been given a dinner by the National Arts Club which she described as the friendliest possible dinner, with speeches and recognition of her work and a speech by Mary.

But I did. I understood that the friendliness, the familiarity, the being "one of the gang," meant even more to Mary-by-herself than the recognition of her work had meant to I-Mary.

Later I was to learn more about that National Arts Club dinner, through one of the members. She has since told me that after Mary Austin had gone to England and been received with enthusiasm by Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, and other lights of the Fabian Group, the New Yorkers did not want to be outdone in showing appreciation of her brilliant mind, and a group of them gave her a testimonial dinner before her departure for the West.

"That was a day when females of a 'certain age' went about clad in somber attire," she said, "but Mary Austin had a gown made for the occasion and it was of a brilliant rose color, evidently expressive of her radiant acceptance of the honor. She was really touching in her gratitude and I remember murmuring to the man next to me, 'The apotheosis of Mary Austin!' a phrase which obtained some little vogue."

In his recent book, *My America*, Louis Adamic tells of knowing Mary Austin in New York. She was very kind to him, invited him to dine with her at the National Arts Club and saw to it that he was invited to the parties given for her. She introduced him to editors and insisted that they take notice of him. At that time she was collecting material for her autobiography, *Earth Horizon*, and was quite confused over it. Herbert Hoover was President and she wanted to give "Herbie," as she called him, an important place in the book: wanted to explain him to his public. She wanted to make them realize that he had gone into public service, not for the money

involved, for he was tired of making money, but through a sincere desire to do good. But she was inhibited by the fear that she might be criticized on the grounds that she was trying to broadcast the fact that she was intimately acquainted with the President of the United States.

She was overwhelmed with material. The task of writing her autobiography, which she thought would be easy, was beset with the difficulty of selecting the significant events. She discussed the work with Adamic in order to get the viewpoint of someone foreign to the scene. She had him go to the public library to help her to refresh her memory about certain items which she wished to include.

"When she told (not asked) me to go look up something for her," he says, "it was much in the same manner in which the mother sends her little boy for an armful of firewood or for a cake of soap at the village store."

But he was touched by her generous, matter-of-fact, brusque, almost fierce interest in him. "She was a strange, grand woman," he says, "I did not understand her in my mind for she was full of contradictions. She was at once extremely fine and perilously near to being bombastic; all sound common sense then a vague folk-cultist—"

It seemed inevitable that Mary Austin should return to *The Land of Journey's Ending*. *The Land of Little Rain* was only a heart-rending remembrance. Carmel was changed. The Sterlings were divorced. How deeply she was moved by this is shown in her words,

"Once I went back to the house, to the altar ring of stones and skulls, but I was too much distressed. I shall never go there again; I shall keep the recollection that I have, the beauty and the preciousness."

CHAPTER XXIII

MARY AUSTIN'S INDOMITABLE ENERGY and her refusal to be shelved by age or illness is a heartening example to all women. She believed that the best twenty years of the life of a woman, active in the arts or professions, are those when the reproductive function accompanied by its physical and emotional disturbances has ceased. The possibilities of accomplishment and reward during these latter years were comparable, in her estimation, to those during the physical period of reproduction.

Age brings maturity of thought and more leisure to find something of the meaning of life apart from the noise and confusion of living. This, to her, was the great adventure of maturity.

In the house that Mary Austin built in the Southwest she found that leisure and that adventure. Not only the congenial people that she had found there, but the beauty of the country decided Mary to build her home, Casa Querida, on the loma overlooking the town of Santa Fé, New Mexico.

There was the sight of the wild plum blossoms, the sound of the pueblo drums calling the He-rain, the smell of the orchards. All of these things are summed up in an article by Mary Austin, *Why I Live in Santa Fé*, which was published in *The Golden Book*.

"My choice of Santa Fé as a final residence is deliberate. I had experience of various cities, including

New York, and three great capitals of the world, and came back with intention to a small town in which I could play a vital part in the community life.

"Here I find three things which my experience has led me to select as most desirable: it is a mountain country, immensely, dramatically beautiful: it is contiguous to the desert with its appeal of mystery and naked space, and it supplies the elements of aboriginal society which I have learned to recognize as my proper medium.

"I have a genius for beginnings, for the origins of art and culture and social organization. I find these things stimulating, informative, providing the key to an intensive understanding of the whole pattern of civilized society. They are the basis of all the wisdom. I have the ground plan to which I revert in perplexity, and from which I draw all my really important conclusions.

"There are other locations in the Southwest which offer equal opportunities for association with the Indians, and for the next most intriguing group, the half way between, which is supplied by the Spanish speaking population of New Mexico, the range and quality of which goes by the name of folk-culture.

"But there are none which offer also the third range of complete intellectual sophistication, as does Santa Fé. For the very reasons which have led me to select it there are gathered here, or visit at longer or shorter durations, people of the first rank of creative and intellectual achievement. There is no time in the year in which there are not to be found individuals of the rank of A. V. Kidder, Sylvanus Morley, John Galsworthy, Carl Sandburg, Willa Cather, Witter Bynner,

John Sloan, Dr. Robert Millikan, Dr. Wm. MacDougall, William Allen White, Paul Kellogg, Sinclair Lewis and scores of welcome names.

"There is the relief of unusual entertainment so often lacking in the American small town; the pageant of the Indian dance—drama, the Spanish fiesta, the open rituals of the church and picturesque survivals, and with it all the possibilities of simple pleasures inexpensively attained such as gardening, the collection of folk lore and easy hospitality. It is the reassurance that however long I may be spared to work here at Santa Fé, that I shall never grow old at it, which confirms me with the happy choice of my home."

In 1929 I drove with a friend of mine by way of Grand Canyon and Gallup and the trading posts along the way to Santa Fé. I had looked forward to seeing Mary again and as soon as we arrived I called her on the telephone. She was very cordial but said she could not possibly see me for several days; that she was working at top speed on two books, *Starry Adventure*, and her autobiography. She would come and have tea with me at the first opportunity, however.

My friend could not understand how I accepted with equanimity what seemed to her to be a rebuff. But I knew Mary and her unswerving devotion to her work.

In about a week she came to tea. I was shocked at her appearance. She had aged and looked ill but her eyes were as keen and far-seeing as ever. She told me that she had undergone an operation and that she had sat up in bed with a drainage tube in the wound and gone on with her writing.

On Thanksgiving Day I called her and asked her to

go for a drive and dine with us afterwards. She accepted eagerly. The day was cold and overcast but I have never had a more thrilling experience. We drove to the Pecos Valley, stopping on the way to visit the ruins of an old Indian village that had been found there by the conquistadores. We took the road which had once been the Santa Fé Trail and read the tablets and inscriptions that had replaced the trees blazed along the way. We shivered at the menace of Apache Canyon from whose mouth the scalp-hunting Apaches swooped down on that trail.

Mary's knowledge of the history and the men who came that way to hunt the Seven Cities of Cibola made those days live again. She explained that they had left the record of their journey in their Spanish-American descendants who still speak the only untainted Spanish tongue in America. They consider it an affront to be spoken of as Mexicans, so proud are they of their Spanish-American lineage.

Mary pointed with pride to adobe walls that had stood for centuries. She laughed heartily as she told of an incident that happened during the World War. In order to arouse patriotism and encourage men to enlist, an army officer was sent to Santa Fé with a personnel in charge of an army tank.

Wishing to demonstrate the invincible power of this war machine the officer arranged a gathering of the people to look on while the tank demolished an ancient adobe wall. The people congregated. The officer, a short, heavy-set man who was impressed with his own importance, directed his subordinates to attack the wall with the tank. Accordingly the huge machine was driven head-on against it. Nothing happened! The officer got

red in the face. The assembled villagers suppressed their mirth with difficulty. Again the order for the attack was given. Again the onslaught was unavailing. The officer and his personnel finally retreated amidst derisive cheers, thoroughly beaten.

Returning through the town we drove on to the Santuario, the old Spanish chapel with its irreplaceable treasures which Mary, through her own efforts in raising the money, had saved from the auctioneer's hammer and presented to New Mexico as a religious memorial.

I realized how vital the preservation of the Spanish occupation and tradition had become to Mary and to the artist's colony of Santa Fé, when she told me how distressed they had been over Willa Cather's book, *Death Comes to the Archbishop*.

Willa Cather had lived in Mary's house while she was writing the book. Mary was ill in the hospital at the time and had not known that Willa Cather gave her allegiance to the French blood of the Archbishop, and sympathized with his desire to build a French cathedral in a Spanish town.

Mary said it was a blow to the local culture from which they had never recovered. She had felt it keenly because the revival of the Spanish arts was the outstanding interest of her life; the thing that kept her going.

"I live largely by the living stream of creative artistry which pours into New Mexico," she said.

On our way back to Santa Fé, I said something of my desire to write and Mary encouraged me. "Try writing rhythmic prose first," she said, "or verse—so—" and then she began to describe the country about us, the buttes, the canyons, the wonderful coloring of painted cliffs

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and Sangre de Cristo mountains, all in words so cadenced that they seemed to fall into a measured pattern of *The Land of Journey's Ending*.

Afterwards I visited her in the home she had built on Camino del Sol. It was a charming place, built in the old Spanish style of architecture. There was a fragrant garden where she had gathered the herbs and blossoming plants of the Southwest.

She took me into her writing room, a large, bare den with a businesslike desk and typewriter. Off this room was a vault where notes and manuscripts were neatly filed, tier on tier.

"This is my bank account," she announced. "This will see me through!"

She told of her part in the restoration of the native arts and showed me beautiful Chimayo blankets woven by the Spanish Americans, pieces of wood carving done by the Mexicans, pottery and weaving from the pueblos, santos that had been brought to her during her illness with a prayer for her recovery.

She told a touching story of an incident that had occurred at the last fiesta where the native arts and crafts were offered for sale. An aged Mexican, Gallagos by name, brought some wood carvings, crude but vigorous in execution. When the fiesta was over and he was handed ninety dollars for the sale of his work, he threw his arms around the neck of the president of the fiesta.

"Now I can die in peace," he cried, tears running down his cheeks, "for years I have owed ninety dollars and I have dreaded to die and leave this debt for my children to pay!"

Mary's delight in the part she had had in bringing

these people into their own was something I have never forgotten. I recalled what Ruskin felt about handiwork and wondered how much of the influence of her reading when she was a young girl had remained to stimulate her efforts in restoring their arts and crafts to these people.

Ruskin wrote: "All the stamped metals, and artificial stones, and imitation woods and bronzes, over the invention of which we hear daily exultation—all the short and cheap and easy ways of doing that whose difficulty is its honor—are just so many obstacles in our already encumbered path."

In the evening we went to call on Mary's neighbors, the Applegates. She said she did not know how she would have endured her illness had it not been for the kindness of her friends in Santa Fé, especially the Applegates. She and Frank Applegate were intensely interested in the Spanish colonial arts and were collaborating on a book on the subject.

The Applegate home was a treasure house, a rambling old adobe which had been restored and was filled with santos and old furniture, tin work and old carvings, choice examples of the arts they were endeavoring to revive.

Mary and I bade each other goodbye in the wide hall of her home. She was wearing a lovely black lace mantilla over her head and around her neck there was a chain of beads of wrought silver supporting a pendant set with turquoise, the work of some Indian silversmith who could make silver run like a song.

Above her head was a santos which the Indians had secured at great expense to themselves from some old chapel and brought, during her illness, so that she

might be restored to health through its miraculous presence.

I saw that Mary was happy here in the Southwest; contented in a way that I had never seen her, mellowed and more kindly. She had put down her roots. She had a home once more. It was significant of Mary that she must needs have a home and a garden. She was never content to be a bird of passage.

Here in this home she spent part of every day at her writing. Then she worked in her garden. She exchanged slips with other gardeners and coaxed them to grow with superlative success. She made jams and jellies and "spiced apples" from the recipe grandmother Polly McAdams had used. She felt a certain pride in bestowing them upon her neighbors when illness or emergency made them most acceptable.

When her writing became laborious, Mary, remembering those days at Lone Pine when Señora Josefa Maria de la Luz Ortiz y Romero taught her to make the famous Mexican dishes, would go shopping in the side streets and *placitas*. She would painstakingly select the corn meal, the chicken, the red beans, chili and savory herbs. All these were cooked together with absorbed attention and finally wrapped in clean white corn husks. This was an undertaking which consumed the better part of two days before her friends would be invited in to partake of the tamales and *enchilladas*.

Through the courtesy of Albert Bender I have had the privilege of reading some very interesting letters which tell of Mary Austin's activities in Santa Fé.

Acknowledging a gift she wrote, "I have been trying to get ready a manuscript of 90,000 words in six weeks to compete for a prize. Toward the end of an effort like

that I grow so weary that I have to resort to fetishes, lighted candles and formulas to keep myself going. The enchanting color of the scarf had such an effect on me that I did get my m.s. off with one day to spare."

When her book, *Starry Adventure* was finished she confessed, "As usual when a book comes out I am plunged in the blackest despair. I am always quite certain it is the worst book I have ever written, that nobody will like it in the least, and that it is quite certain that New York won't like it which always has practically so much to do with the sale of a book. New York can't bear to think that anybody should care so much about any other part of the country as we who know it care for New Mexico."

Yet in another letter she shows how little criticism really touched her.

"Normally, you know, I don't concede much to the average reader. I have, in fact, paid a high price for the privilege of telling the average reader to go to hell when it comes to fundamental things like this. As I see it the reader is or isn't interested in that sort of thing, and if he isn't naturally interested I doubt if by taking pains he can be made to be interested. I suspect that a lot of people aren't interested in your Buddha, but I hope you won't change it on that account."

An illustration of the continued use of the subconscious is given in another letter: "I am still working at the back of my mind on the autobiography, but I have not begun the actual writing of it, in fact I try to think of that part as little as possible. It will mean eight or nine months of steady work after I begin."

In spite of the often expressed opinion of her detractors to the contrary, Mary did not overestimate the

value of her own work. "I must tell you the truth about that quotation about the Cambridge Don who said I was the most intellectual woman in America. I am not sure that he has any more ground for saying so than that I read a book of his and praised it. I am not sure that he ever read anything else of mine than my comment on his book. He made the remark to another man whom I regard as one of the greatest intellectuals in England, who repeated it to an editor of mine who made it public. So I am afraid that there is not a very great deal of ground for presuming that I am anything so formidable!"

Again her varied activities are shown by the following letters.

"It begins to look as though having spent the last twenty-five years largely explaining the Indian to the American public, I am going to have to spend another twenty-five in defending him from the too great enthusiasm which the public has now conceived for him. Why do you think Americans can never think of anything to do about the things they most detest or most approve, except to make a law about it? I do wish you could have heard me dealing with the committee on the point of their making a law about the conduct of Indian arts. And why do Americans imagine that they know more about art than artists do?"

"Only Senator Cutting and myself take any interest in the Spanish speaking people here. Why is it that our middle class Americans are so obtuse in respect to all other American groups? And especially so if they are of the creative temperament as these people

are. And I wonder why it fell to my lot to have to champion so many of them.

"Then there is the Spanish Arts Association which I organized when it seemed likely that I might not live and hoped it might go on in memory of me."

"Secretary Wilbur has not only taken an attitude of relying on my judgment but he put into my hands the shaping of a program for Indian Art. On top of these two comes the committee on cultural relations with Latin America, demanding that I should go down to Mexico City."

"There was an article of mine in *Theater Arts Monthly* which might interest you and something in *The Nation* on the Colorado River project; at the recent congress on which subject I assisted in representing New Mexico, as the only woman present among all those engineers and irrigation experts it was a priceless experience. Probably the first time in the world's history that an avowed representative of cultural interest ever participated in such a congress."

I left Mary doing the work she enjoyed, associated with the artists and writers whose communal life is so happily pictured by Alice Corbin Henderson in her introduction to the collection of poems, *The Turquoise Trail*, the title taken from the original trade route which ran from Old to New Mexico:

"This book is dedicated to the poets included in this collection and offered to them as a record of companionship—the covers of the book now taking the place of the low roofed adobe houses within whose walls

these poems have, at one time or another, been shared in manuscript form."

I felt she was among people who understood and loved her in spite of her faults. She had the faculty of making enemies but also of inspiring love. There is an amusing story told in Santa Fé of a dinner party that she gave for Sinclair Lewis. She spent most of the time in telling Red Lewis how poor a writer he was and generally rebuking him for everything he had ever done or said. Lewis took it all without objection. At last, when Mary had finished him off in good style, he got up, strode over to her, embraced and kissed her, exclaiming:

"God damn you, Mary, I love you!"

Mary always loved a good scrap. She fought against so-called "Civic Improvement" in Santa Fé with much the same zeal that the artists in Carmel have done. She worsted the club women who planned to invade Taos and make it a modern Chautauqua. She fought the straightening of streets and the demolishing of picturesque old adobes which are part of the charm of Santa Fé. She berated the newspaper editor for advocating the destruction of those things which were said to stand in the way of the March of Progress, until he said if she entered his editorial sanctum again he would put her out. Yet he was among the most sincere mourners at her death and read part of the funeral service.

Mary never lost her propensity for stimulating adverse criticism. Probably no one with an unusual amount of genius and ambition ever does.

Mrs. Applegate who neighbored with and admired her for years says: "A kinder neighbor I have never known. I wish I could write so that I might tell the

reading public the kind, sweet, generous, sympathetic side of her wonderful character."

According to Mrs. Applegate, Mary was always generous with her time but refused to be interrupted during her working hours. She raged when tourists persisted in seeing her and not only interfering with her work but disrupting her chain of thought.

It often happened that the things which she did with the kindest spirit served to antagonize those she was endeavoring to help. She was always generous to young writers. She was willing to read manuscripts and, even when she was very tired, would devote hours at night to helping them with their problems after her own work was over. But her honest opinion regarding their work was often not what they wanted to hear and they criticized her criticism of their manuscripts. Some of the writers, jealous of her success, said she was arrogant and selfish.

To the general public in Santa Fé, she was a "nut." But that is the term often applied to the members of the artist's colony. Quite recently I met a young woman from Albuquerque. When she found I had been in Santa Fé she asked, "Did you see Nut Row?" I replied that I had not but that I had visited Mary Austin's home on Camino del Sol.

"That's Nut Row!" she insisted, "That's where all those queer people have built all those crazy houses!"

CHAPTER XXIV

WHEN *A CHILD WENT FORTH*, MY OWN book, was ready for the publisher I wrote Mary asking if she would be willing to write a foreword. She responded very generously and enclosed a proof sheet of her autobiography in which she had mentioned me. A few weeks before her death I received a letter from her from Santa Fé in answer to one of mine:

"Yes, I have been quite seriously ill since you last heard from me. I have had a return of the heart trouble and have not been able to do much for myself but I am slowly improving."

Speaking of my own book, she wrote, "There are some things I would have liked to have asked you about and would have wished to know more. Women are too reticent, I think, about such things....I expect myself to be in California the latter part of December or the early part of January. Perhaps we can have a little visit together."

Looking forward to that visit in December or January, the announcement of her death brought in more poignant measure that same regret with which I always close *The Land of Little Rain*, *The Flock*, *The Basket Woman*, *Lost Borders*. Those are the books through which, due to mutual experience and friendly contact, I understand and appreciate her most.

My feeling of loss was mitigated when I reread *Experiences Facing Death*,* which Mary had written sev-

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eral years before, during and after convalescence from what had threatened to be a fatal illness.

Reading this illuminating and reassuring book, one is convinced that the author was at the pinnacle of her intellectual and psychological understanding at that time. She recounts her investigations of ancient beliefs, early concepts of death, primitive prayer methods, behaviors of consciousness, and tells how she was urged to that quest through surprise at the fear that beset her when death seemed imminent. The book became a record of her endeavor to find the reason for that fear and rationalize it.

She wrote: "Of death, man comes into the world knowing nothing and feeling universally that somehow he himself will never suffer it. . . . Finally, when the end leaps out at him starkly, not to be evaded or denied, the stoutest fronts it with sudden consternation. That was how it was with me, when, after a life span which made death, though unwelcome, appear reasonable, I faced that possibility with what was to me the nearest approach to fear that I had ever known. And of all that I had thought or observed about death, the last thing I expected was to be afraid of it. . . .

"After that I had time to gather up my fear and question it in the face of my still undaunted conviction that human consciousness survives the dissolution of the body. To my relief I discovered that the structure of a rational belief in survival remained intact. With death staring me in the face, my reasons for believing that there is no such thing, remained unaltered."

Never, since her experience of the Presence of God, as a child, had Mary doubted the ever-livingness of consciousness. It was evident that fear, with her, was

not dependent on lack of faith as she interpreted the word, for she said: "By faith I mean neither intellectual belief, nor the blind forcing of allegiance to a tradition. I mean exactly what Paul of Tarsus meant—the evidence of things not seen, the evidence of life's capacity to triumph over objective difficulties by developing organs and functions not yet discovered by the scientist's microscope."

Why, then, Mary questioned, should she fear death?

It became apparent that one reason was that she was reluctant to depart from a world so filled with beauty that she could not visualize another in which she would rather live. "It is permissible," she wrote, "to say that I like my friends, my work, and my house here on the loma; and the thought that I should never again see the wild plum blossoms storm the banks of Pena Blanca, never hear the drums of the Keres calling up the Herain with its wing hollows filled with evening blueness, smote me with an insupportable pang."

Another reason was the urge to go on with the work she had begun; to see the fulfillment of hopes and dreams toward the consummation of which she had worked so untiringly.

Then, too, she had pledged herself—assumed responsibilities—which, with her inborn honesty, she craved time and opportunity to meet.

So, Mary found, it was not the fear of leaving life, but the fear of leaving *this* life that daunted her. She says: "Deep within life is the need to orient itself toward death; the one incontrovertible item of our knowledge about death is that it gives notice of itself as motion, we go toward it, we go through it. It never, to the last wave of a hand over the hill, loses its goingness, the unimpugnable quality of experience...."

"What had upset me was not the doubt of the continuity, but the fear of continuing to live in a state in which I could not avail myself of my principal means of spiritual sustenance and most of my enjoyment."

When Mary attempted to approach her friends on the subject she found how difficult it was to talk to people about death: "When I undertook to discuss what was naturally and healthily occupying my mind, I found myself shushed and consoled, or reproved and tactfully diverted, according to the temper of the company, exactly as it happened fifty years ago when I asked my elders things nice girls weren't supposed to know....I discovered that by accepting postulates of the various organized religions in my neighborhood, I could have commanded their spiritual and ritualistic resources without difficulty. What I couldn't get, at any available price, was the serious, intellectual, undoctrinate discussion of survival as a psychological possibility. Against every effort of mine to reorganize my own consciousness in view of that possibility, there arose around me a conspiracy of refusals, of horrific avoidance of the subject."

But Mary continued to wrestle with the problem. She says: "I have confessed to being afraid when I hadn't expected to be. I was appalled at the lack of ready to use material for composing or allaying those fears; and I ended at being astonished at the support I was able to collect out of the materials of my life, for a new front of death in which fear is reduced to a degree that any intelligent person may admit without loss of dignity. And in view of the prevailing fear which I seem to have uncovered on all sides, among people unable to avail themselves of a codified religion, it seems

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worth while to try to account for the items which have enabled me to arrive at a less timorous attitude toward an eventuality which, at the best, can not be postponed for more than another score or so of years."

Those conclusions that enabled her to arrive at a less timorous attitude toward death are worthy of thoughtful consideration:

"The mistake, of course, is in thinking you have to 'accept' a religion to get any good out of it. All you have to do is to use it."

"There is help to be had. There is more life in man than he has ever put to the proof. There is more power accessible than he has utilized. There is more knowledge in him than his systems of education take into account."

"The best of all preparations for shuffling off this mortal coil is, in view of the nature of the evidence, to have acquired fluency in the natural interaction of subliminal consciousness and intelligent consciousness."

"What one must admit is that all these traits of consciousness are the ends of threads which we find tied together in our own life complex, the other ends of which, infinitely extended, are gathered into the hand of God. All we know here is, that by getting hold of these thread ends, we can, with intelligence, 'work' them."

"Made articulate, directed by the intelligence and gradually involving the whole range of consciousness, prayer becomes an incalculable power, whether meas-

ured by its effect on the user, or by its objective accomplishment."

"There will be things yet to be done, and the stuff that we work in will be the utterly familiar and still mysterious and exciting stuff of ourselves."

At sixty-five Mary Austin was recognized as the leading literary figure of the Southwest and the outstanding American woman writer of her generation. Notwithstanding, Mary never felt that she had realized her possibilities. This was especially true with her autobiography, *Earth Horizon*. Rich, glowing tapestry of American life that it seemed to her readers yet, to her, it was so much less than she had planned it to be. It was as though her words had failed to convey what her brain conceived.

But it unburdened her mind. She no longer felt the urge to struggle to make something different of her life. She accepted the pattern as it was, not with resignation but with satisfaction. Released from inhibitions by its psycho-analytical revelations, Mary became more gentle, more kindly; the mellow great-grandmother of the Southwest.

"I should like to write a book like a Christmas tree," she wrote to Albert Bender, "with real stars on it and also a few little homely hearth-side candles and quite a lot of bright tinsel. In so many things we keep striving after real gold when tinsel would do just as well and could be so much more easily obtained. I can remember when no lady would wear imitation jewels and I have come to think that was also one of the silly conventions of our age. If all you want of a jewel is that it should shine and have a good color I don't see why

glass isn't as good as the real thing. Anyway I am going to have all the tinsel and synthetic sparkle that I want hereafter."

Another time she wrote, "I should like a little space to love the world before I leave it."

At her home, Casa Querida, she was granted that little space. There on the loma where the scent of piñon smoke rose like incense from the chimneys of her neighbors in Santa Fé, she tended her garden, watering it faithfully until the day of her death. From the garden she looked out across the flat roofs of the village to the desert of her Land of Journey's Ending and on to the colorful range of the Sangre de Cristo (Blood of Christ) mountains.

Her neighbors came to know her, not only as the Uncrowned Queen of Santa Fé, a wise woman and a seeress, but as a lovable old lady who knew how to coax things to grow and who made delicious jams and jellies which she graciously distributed.

She still had her peccadillos which surprised and irritated them at times, but she was one of them and they were willing to concede her right to the eccentricities of genius.

She never succumbed to her illnesses and gloried in defying Father Time and circumventing the doctors. She was bored by the limitations placed upon her by physical conditions and sympathetic friends coming to visit and bring flowers to her sick bed would find her propped up with pillows, writing furiously on some argumentative subject.

Her niece, Mary Hunter, who lived with her at this time said that often she would be so overcome with

ennui that she would appear very ill but would come out of it when she heard some celebrity was in town or when some one for whom she cared came to see her.

But after *Earth Horizon* was published her will to live was less strong. She continually spoke of her death as though it was a tryst she would be glad to keep.

Perhaps the memories so vividly revived by her work on her autobiography renewed the poignant sense of grief that she had known as a child when Father and Jennie died and brought a desire for reunion with those whom she always felt were the only ones who unselfishly loved her. It was fortunate that Mary Hunter, Jim's daughter, was with her those last days to renew the feeling of friendly ties and assuage her loneliness. That her hopes for her own child that had been so cruelly blighted, were renewed in this niece is shown by her dedication of the *Trail Book*.

"To Mary, my niece, in the hope that she may find through the trails of her own country the road to Wonderland."

The Poet's Round-Up of 1934 was the occasion of the last appearance of Mary Austin. Mary always enjoyed the Poet's Round-Up. On the occasion of a previous one she had written:

"We have just completed the third annual Poet's Round-Up. Although I feel that I don't really belong in it, not being a professional poet, at least not considering poetry as the best of my activities, you will be pleased to hear that I made an unqualified success. I had even the pleasure of having Cyrus McCormick insist that I was the handsomest person present which is

the sort of compliment that at my age is very much appreciated; although I suppose it does not mean a very great deal. Handsome is not one of the qualifications of female poets."

It is evident that the friends of the Round-Up were very dear to her for she paid them this tribute:

I have known poets in my time—

*I have also known a cardinal,
A gold laced general,
A cabinet minister and several millionaires,
Learned men, lover men—
And I would give the lot of them
For any one of half a dozen poets that I know!*

*And I say, Lord,
When my time comes to go,
I shall not care for
Heaven if the poets stay outside,
You may keep my starry crown
For some poor soul that craves it,
And give my harp
To any angel child that plays it,*

*But I will take the poets and what you have left over,
A windy hill to walk upon, a filmy cactus flower,
A maple tree, a lady fern, or bee caroused in clover,
Of all I've loved and sung about just the odds and ends,
And two or three poets to be my friends.*

It seems eminently fitting that Inez Sizer Cassidy who had accompanied Mary on many of her trips in the Land of Journey's Ending, should read on the occasion of Mary's last public appearance in that land, a poem:

To Mary Austin

*As in fulfillment of the dawn,
The evening star at close of day
Lights up the western sky,
So you upon my life have cast a ray
And I am upward drawn.*

Mary was introduced, "For years the boss of the crowd." She came forward on the terrace, standing out against the tawny adobe wall, framed by green bushes.

A deep sense of attention rested on the audience. Many of them knew how great an effort she had made to meet with them. They appreciated the fact that her appearance of quiet strength and steadiness was due to her dominant will and desire to be with them.

She read one short poem. She swayed a little and they held their breath. "Perhaps," one of the group afterwards wrote to me, "we held her with our own strength, with our outgoing sympathy, affection and appreciation of her gallantry."

She rallied and went on to read in a firm, vibrant voice, her own poems to the beloved saints of New Mexico.*

San Francisco

*Saint that in gentleness
With the wild creatures there
Walked in the wilderness,
Preaching to wolf and snake
Kindness for Jesus' sake,*

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*And to birds of the air;
Of thy sweet friendliness
Mine be a share!
Let me not needlessly
Waken to fear of me
Any least thing
That goes with claw or wing,
Squirrel in hollow tree,
Birds in their nest,
Let me not heedlessly
Scare the shy waterfowl
From reedy rest.
And if I cannot preach God's gracious word
To any beast or bird,
May all God's creatures teach
God's ways to me!*

Santa Doucelina

*Sweet saint, whose eyes did see
The peach turn rosy on the tree,
Ripe moons of apricots appear
Through cloudy green,
Or skins of pears grow honey clear,
And at the sight
God's love was round you like a light,
Lady, watch in my orchard here,
It may be that I shall see what you have seen!*

*Lady for whom need only pass
The striped snake in the low grass
Or field mouse squeak behind the plow,
Or any bird*

*Sing sweetly forth from any bough,
And at the sound
For you God's grace did suddenly abound,
Sweet Saint, walk in my orchard now,
It may be I shall hear what you have heard!*

San Isidro

*No bell, but blackbirds call my matin hour,
The brown loam curls before my share,
As I thank God for a ploughman saint
To heed a ploughman's prayer.*

*I do not, San Isidro, vainly ask
Angels to plow for me as once for you,
But help me drive the ploughshare deep
And hold the furrow true.*

*I do not pray for sudden springs to gush
With welcome water from the sun-parched plain
But since on all the rain must fall,
Send us the poor man's rain.*

*A farmer has so many worrying things
That seem too small for him to ask of God,
To make the corn fill out the tasselling ear,
The beans round out the pod,*

*To make the cows give down their milk
To keep the prices fair,
But San Isidro, friend and farmer once,
Hearken a ploughman's prayer.*

Afterwards one of the group recalled that in May
Mary had gone with her to see the hillside shrine of

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Saint Isidro, on his name day, over in the edge of the canyon—Saint Isidro, the ploughman's saint, praying while the friendly angels drove his oxen!

Everyone knew that there was something in Mary's eyes that day that was unusually arresting. As they met her gaze each one felt that they were receiving a direct and positive message, as though a spiritual tie bound them very closely to her. Five days later when they found she had slipped away in her sleep, they understood.

Simple services were held at Casa Querida, the home which Mary loved and which she had bequeathed to the Indian Arts' Association, fulfilling her desire to "leave it as a center from which my work can go on after me."

An unpublished poem, written by her, was read as part of the service:

A Poet Orders a Burial Place *

*Yesterday, as I went up Canyon Road
To buy the half acre crest of Cedros Hill,
For a place to be buried in,
One called to me, passing, "Widen the space, my friend,
Maybe at last, I shall lie down beside you!"*

*And today the townsmen are laughing;
Winking and nudging, as who would say,
There, but for God's grace, go we
Who shall lie down in level places,
Ordered in rows, tombstoned, asserting
Death's democracy—
"Here lies—departed this life—"*

* By permission of the Executors of the Estate of Mary Austin.

*But I say in death there is no democracy,
Only in the flesh, which owns to the common hunger,
Food and drink and desire; and pride and need of
fighting.*

*Here in the flesh is democracy, over-riding
Spirit that chooses neither when it shall come or go,
but surely*

*Where it shall put away this garment of the body,
Till the moth of time shall have made it
Dust that it was before the spirit donned it.*

*I shall lie mine in a lonely place,
In a high place, whence the round bosomed
Curve of the earth is evinced in the mountain bosses,
Where morning and evening
Shall offer a hyacinthine wreath to the dust's adventure;
Wreath of the six petaled bloom of the snow,
And the frost flower's fragile leafage.
And ever the rain shall stroke my dust
With smooth making fingers.*

*There, on the Cedros, I shall assert
By choice of those who lie near me,
How deeply I have believed in the spirit's aristocracy,
I shall admit, at the last, to my own half-acre
Such as have known in this life
How spirit keeps its own terms with the flesh,
Wearing its livery.
Buccaneers of the spirit, braving for life's great sake
The eyeless face of oblivion.
There shall be none who need, to eke out the sense of
Existence,
"Here lies—departed—*

*They shall be those who come back from star-ranging
errands*

*Nothing ashamed of what they did in the dust,
Any more than the dust is ashamed
Having been pismire or louse,
Or pulsing vortex of ions.
They shall be proud of their dust recalling
How it stored up and advantaged the spirit.
They shall be those who remember
How once in Judea, the Good Companion
Brought to be judge of the flesh
Stooped and wrote in the dust and wiped it out with
His fingers,
Even so, He said, neither do I condemn thee.*

*They shall come back to Cedros Hill,
Time by time as they will, neither bound nor sundered,
As men return to fish in the creeks of their boyhoods
Pleased by silversided, bright minnows of remem-
brance*

*They shall absorb and engage each other,
They shall be drunk on the rose-purple light,
That the hill gives back to the evening,
On the beam that the silver rain-drop embosoms
In the cupped leaf of argemoney;
They shall carouse on beauty.*

*Oh, say if it comforts you, Death is a leveler,
Assuage with epitaphs the suppressions and amputations
Of the soul's unassailable gift of apartness.
Rest, who will, remembering
All dust is alike only
When it lies inert; dismembered,*

*But I say, not even the dust of poets is intimidated
Ours shall awake in the dark
We shall call to each other,
We shall begin to climb by the roots of the bunch grass,
On the way to be men again, we shall be trees and
mountains.
Oh, come not to Cedros saying, "Here lies—"
We who are freed from the commonality of flesh,
Once Death with his stroke beknights us,
We shall be far and far away on starry adventures.*

EPILOGUE

When I am Dead *

* By permission of the Executors of the Estate of Mary Austin.

*This is what I shall do
When I am dead.*

*When the hot wind frets not
Nor the sharp sleet;
When weariness wears not my heart
Nor stones my feet;
When the fire's spell is unbound
And I faint no more for bread—
How well I know what I shall do
When I am dead!*

*I shall take a white road
On a warm last-lighted hill,
Where saffron-shod the evening goes,
Where the pale gillias uncloze
And the flutter-moths are still.*

*I shall take a high road where the flock scent lingers
In the browsed sage and the blue bush-lupin fingers,
I shall find a by road by the foot changes
Till I come where the herder's fires
Blossom in the dusk of the grape-colored ranges.
And I shall sit by the bedding fires
With the little long armed men,*

*Eleheverray and Little Pete and Narcisse Julianne—
For what can come when sense decays
They being even as I, and all of us being dead—
And the dull flesh fails,
But that man is one with his thought at last
And the wish prevails?*

*So it shall be an we will
With a burnished blue hot sky,
And a heat dance over the open range
Where tall pale guidons of dust go by.
Or it shall be dark, as we choose,
At the lambing pens under the Tremblor Hill
With the mothering mutter of the ewes,
And a wind to which the herd grass cowers,
While the dogs edge in to the watching fires
And darkly the procreant earth suspires.*

*So it shall be when Balzar the Basque
And the three Manx men
And Pete Giraud and my happy ghost
Walk with the flock again.*

I could not feel that Mary was very far away for she had said of death, "I was so convinced of going on after it, that I thought to pass through the experience called dying might prove interesting, and even advantageous. As near as I could guess from predilection, I should go on as the guardian spirit of a little forest of silver firs in an easterly lap of the Sierras where in January the drifts are forty feet deep and in June the air is odorous and hot with the breath of saxifrage and penstemon. There I should shake out the sapling

firs from the slogging snows, keep the deer from trampling the white lupins along the creek, and manifest as a blue shaft of light in the green and windy gloom.*

So, in lieu of that visit which is postponed and which I shall always believe would have been very self-revealing for both of us, I went back to that country that lies between the high Sierras, south from Yosemite—east and south by the Long Trail that finally leads to the Mojave Desert.

Could we have chosen a place for that visit which is postponed, I am sure that we would have gone together to that country. Mary often longed to return there.

When I returned to The Land of Little Rain I went first to Bakersfield, to Rose Station, to the Weed Patch, to Ranchos El Tejon where the Hunter family came as homesteaders to settle along the fringe of the great tract of land that went into the original Spanish grant of La Liebre, Castac, and Los Alamos y Agua Caliente.

From there I followed the Long Trail where Mary had said she would come to “walk with the flock again.” Her Land of Little Rain is a high, wide country with trails that lead to lake-gemmed mountains and blue gentian meadows, a country where silver sage mists the foothills that lead to range on range, cleft by shadowy canyons, crowned by glacier polished peaks.

It was here that Mary grew to know the wild things: when and why the deer shifted their feeding grounds, how the lacy patterns in the sand pictured the moonlit wanderings of bob-cat, coyote and rat-tailed rovers.

Along these trails she visited with sheep herders,

* *Christ in Italy*, Copyright by the Executors of the Estate of Mary Austin.

pocket-hunters, Indians and small gods on the way to the river of Hassayampa.

I drove to the site of the family home on the Stein Canal, the place where Mary was married to Wallace Austin. It is now an agricultural experiment station. There is nothing left of the Hunter house, but a weeping willow still stands at the spot where a bridge crossed the canal to the road that led to the house, and there are remains of an old orchard with fig trees.

Bakersfield has given over her flocks and herds to become the center of a great oil industry. The immense holdings of Henry Miller and the beautiful Tevis estate are broken up into memories of the times that were.

There is a clock tower in the center of Bakersfield's busy streets that was erected to the memory of General Beale. In the gardens of Alfred Harrell, the man who was superintendent of schools when Mary Austin applied for her teacher's certificate, I ate Persian grapes, grown from the cuttings of vines that General Beale's son brought from that far-away land after he married the daughter of James G. Blaine and became United States Minister to Persia.

I went about asking, "Which one of all the people who knew Mary Austin when she lived here was her intimate friend?" They all replied, "She had no intimate friends!"

Yet Bakersfield has no prouder monument to the memory of its citizens than the books of Mary Austin which circulate to every small town and hamlet through the Kern County Library.

As Lincoln Steffens once said, in a critical résumé of her work, "There are stories of desert women, miners, herders, store-keepers, gamblers, Indians, wives, daugh-

ters and people.... She put the land into *The Land of Little Rain*, the land and the plants and the shadows. She put the animals and the animal-like men into *The Flock*. The Indians are in the *Basket Woman* and the rest of us are in *Lost Borders*.

"And taken altogether, these and her plays and her novels—they contain knowledge and religion, nature and human nature; they contain all the plain facts of the desert, but so understood, with such sympathy and comprehension—that they are life and the poetry of life anywhere."

The Los Angeles aqueduct which took the water from Owen's River Valley and put an end to all schemes for irrigation, left Lone Pine, the Little Town of the Grapevines, to become just another tourist town, so like its sisters all over the country. Only sentinel Mount Whitney and the glorious range from which it springs reclaim it from utter commonplaceness.

Sightseers come here to assemble pack trains to climb to the summit of the highest mountain in the United States to fish for the golden trout that are found in the waters of Whitney Creek. All day long, in the summer season, automobiles back and fill and roar up the Owen's River Valley to the mountain resorts that have become a playground of Hollywood and Los Angeles.

The traveler in Lone Pine is invited to gaze on the summit of Mount Whitney through a telescope that stands on a corner of the main street. He may choose that or the view from the porch of the air-cooled hotel.

And the town—the Little Town of the Grapevines—with its strings of electric lights, its neon signs, its gas stations and quick-lunch counters, its poolrooms, one of

them trying to capture the lure of "the days of old, days of gold," by its sign that reads, Bodie Mike's Pool Room.

The Little Town of the Grapevines—were it not that Mary Austin caught its memories and its moods for us at the moment when it hung suspended between the old and the new, we would find little of interest in the town itself. But turn the pages of *The Land of Little Rain* and all the ugly modernity is gone:

"Come away, you who are obsessed with your importance in the scheme of things, and have got nothing you did not sweat for, come away by the round valleys and full-bosomed hills, to the even breathing days, to the kindliness, earthiness, ease of El Pueblo de las Uvas—"

I visited the library in Lone Pine. All Mary Austin's books were on the shelves, but when I asked of her life there and her work I was met with the same criticism that existed when she first wrote *The Land of Little Rain*, the same animosity against what the people considered her ill treatment of Mr. Austin. "She picked his brains!" said the librarian.

In Independence I talked with Judge Dehy who still rules the destiny of the Inyo Courts. We went together to Mary Austin's home there and looked across to "My Neighbor's Field." The house still stands at the end of the street and is referred to as the "Mary Austin House."

A great transformer station that harnesses the electric power generated by the mountain streams farther up the valley, stands on "My Neighbor's Field." It is the property of the Los Angeles Aqueduct.

A weeping willow tree that Mary Austin planted there still thrives in the garden of her home. I recalled

the weeping willow by the bridge on the Stein Canal and the one in her garden in Santa Fé and remembered the verse she had written,

*When I go to bed in summer
It is neither day or night,
But too dark for any playing,
And too clear for candle light;
And I watch the weeping willow
Like my mother's loosened hair,
Sweeping softly past my window
Lifting in the wandering air.**

Judge Dehy talked of the times when he and Mary used to go together to bury the dead and of how she had said, "When my time comes I hope you will be there to preach my funeral sermon."

There was a wistfulness about the recollection that made me know he regretted the fact that the opportunity did not come to him.

In Bishop I found that the feeling against Mary Austin as an individual entirely eclipsed any admiration of or pleasure and pride in her work. I was told that the Club Women of Inyo County had started a movement to perpetuate her memory, in recognition of her genius, by placing a fountain in The Land of Little Rain. The design called for a low pool where even the small desert creatures might come to drink. It was a charming gesture to the memory of a woman who had known and loved the country so well.

But so lasting and bitter is the aloofness of prejudice that the supervisors, backed by the strong masculine senti-

* *The Children Sing in the Far West*, Copyright, Houghton Mifflin Co.

ment of the community, refused to have such a memorial erected to honor one who had failed to live by the standards of her neighbors in her housekeeping, her mothering of her child or her attitude towards her husband. And so the matter was dropped.

Mary once wrote to a friend: "Too many of the men I have known have not been able to forgive me for having a mind and life of my own—"

After all, those supervisors who sat in judgment might have remembered what Mary Austin says in *A Woman of Genius*,¹ "It does not particularly matter what happens to the vessel of personality as long as the essential fluid gets through."

I wondered which one of them, when their time to go arrived, could say with her, "In the intervals of pain and sick bed exigencies I never felt the least necessity to live my life over differently.

"I found myself regretting occasions when I had not been kind—regretting that I had ever been unkind at all. But in respect to those things which my admirers, if I had any, would probably wish to forget, curiously I sighed a little because there had not been more. I regretted the narrow and repressive moralities in which I had been brought up, if these had been in any way responsible for my having lived less intensely than I might; if these had made me love or hate less, or less variously than opportunity afforded. No. I did not regret my hates. I have always hated lying and cowardice, and latterly I have spent a great deal of time hating war—" ²

¹ *A Woman of Genius*, Copyright, Houghton Mifflin Co.

² *Experiences Facing Death*, Copyright, 1931, by Bobbs-Merrill Company.

Returning to the coast by way of Bakersfield I encountered further criticism of Mary Austin and her work.

"I wish I had never known Mary Austin," one woman said. "She was so selfish, so cruel, so mean! I read her books and admire her power of description, the beauty of the language. I feel cheated for when I read other beautiful books I wonder if the author was as unlovely at heart as Mary Austin."

Psychology teaches that selflessness is one of the most undesirable attributes. . . . There is a salutary self-preservation. A plant must reach down with roots and up to the sun on its own account before it can bear fruit. . . . Lives of all great men and women of achievement testify that they would never have realized their goals and served mankind with their particular gifts if they had fulfilled all the regimented requirements that were expected of them. They put that thing first which properly belongs first; whatever concerned a realization of their gifts and the furtherance of their usefulness, and dropped from life whatever interfered.

We are told to assemble and accent our convictions as to what belongs to us and stabilize our conclusions by continual affirmation to ourselves and others as to what we intend to do and be.

The urge toward accomplishment was unusually strong in Mary Austin. Had she denied it she would have become a frustrated, unhappy woman, incapable of helping herself or others.

I am proud that the women of Owen's River Valley were understanding enough to forget her faults and acclaim her triumphant accomplishment and to propose a memorial.

Southern Shoshone Song of Old Woman About to Die *

*Alas, that I should die,
That I should die now,
I who know so much!*

*It will miss me,
The twirling fire stick:
The fire coal between the hearth stones,
It will miss me.*

*The Medicine songs,
The songs of magic healing:
The medicine herbs by the water borders,
They will miss me:
The basket willow,
It will miss me:
All the wisdom of women,
It will miss me!*

*Alas that I should die,
Who know so much.*

MARY AUSTIN.

* From *The American Rhythm*, Copyright, Harper & Brothers.

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